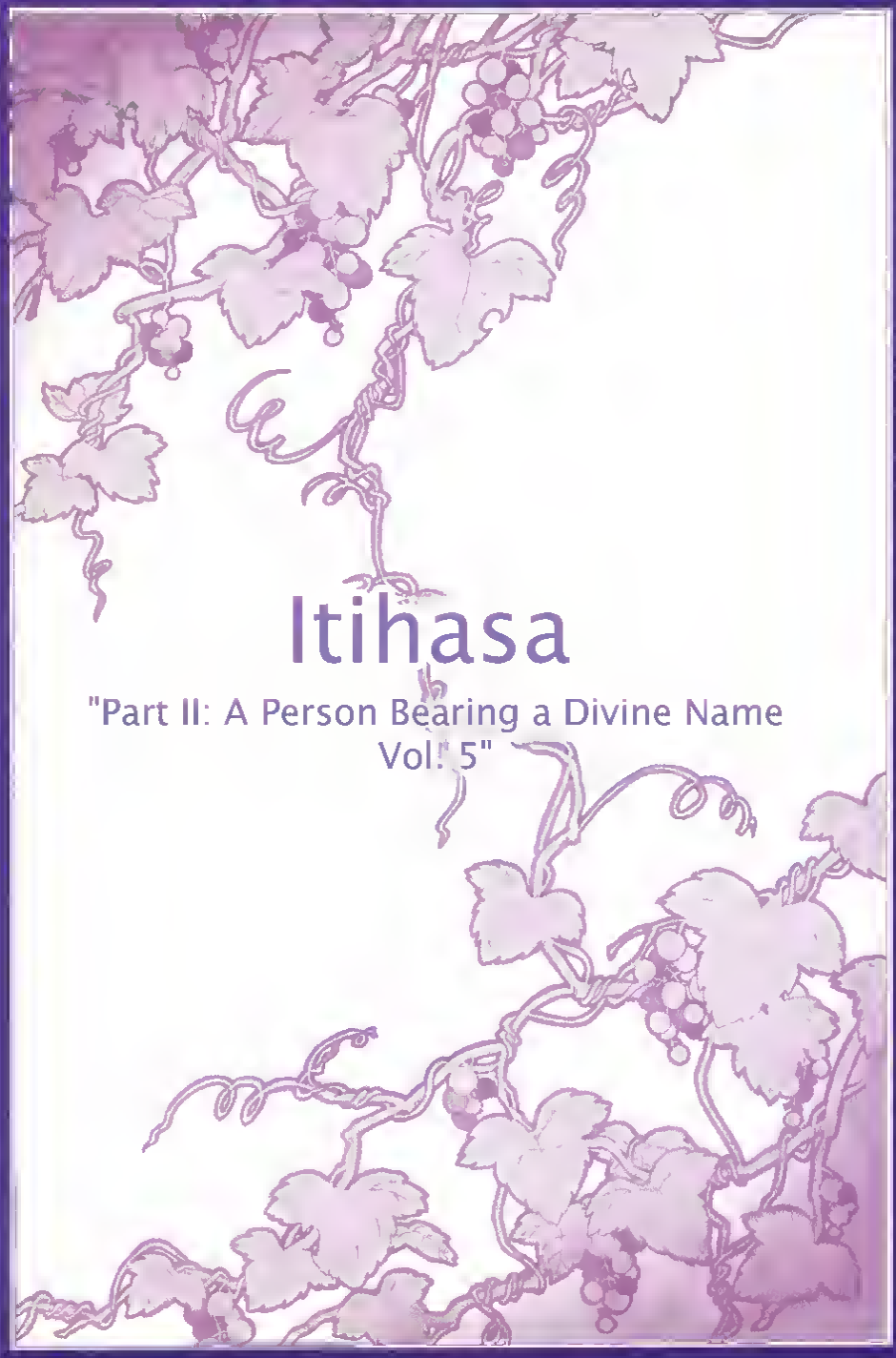
Itihasa 5

Wakako Mizuki



Itihasa

"Part II: A Person Bearing a Divine Name
Vol. 5"

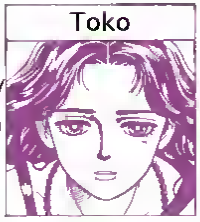
Itihasa

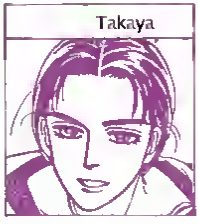
Part II: A Person Bearing a Divine Name

Recap & Main Characters

●Part I Because of her destiny, Toko is sent down the river as soon as she is born. She is found by seven-year-old Takaya as if they had called out to each other, and Toko is raised as his sister. Takaya's tribe follows the gods that cannot be seen. They are gentle people who use the wisdom received from these gods (mantras, yang stones, the power of nature, etc) as the foundation for their lives. Two generations ago, an oracle foretold: "The two great continents will be reduced to dust and then, after a great flood, gods that can be seen will appear in foreign lands everywhere, and the world will fall into chaos." Despite this ominous prophecy, Toko grows into a vibrant, kind-hearted girl under the affectionate care of Takaya. Seven years later, the tribe suddenly falls victim to the prophecy. The Kiyu Faction--a group of demon gods and warriors under Kiyu the Silver Horned God--attacks the tribe, kidnapping the children and killing everyone else. Takaya, Toko, and Aohiko escape the attack while in the mountains looking for a yang stone. They then meet the demigod Risson, God of the True Law, and his warriors (including Katsura and Ichirota), who are pursuing the demon gods. The gods that can be seen are divided into (benevolent) demigods and (evil) demon gods. It seems they are locked in a life-or-death struggle that has taken them to this island country in search of the wisdom of the gods that cannot be seen. Resolving to become strong to protect Toko, Takaya wants to join Risson's group. Aohiko, however, plans to part ways with the group and embark on a journey to spread the wisdom of the gods that cannot be seen, but Risson uses his psychic power to make Aohiko believe he has decided to go with them of his own free will.

During a journey, Toko and Aohiko are attacked by a lone demon god in the forest. Aohiko falls off a cliff, and Takaya, who goes out looking for Toko, is critically wounded by Koma and his friends (Takaya's rivals in the youth group) under the manipulative influence of the demon god. Toko saves Takaya with a mantra that transfers her life force to him, leaving her in a deathlike state. As Toko hovers between life and death, another Toko (!?) guides her toward life. The other Toko, however, tells her that they are destined to kill each other if they meet again. Meanwhile, Aohiko is found by Risson at the foot of the cliff and returns after a few days. Aohiko's survival causes Katsura to realize she is in love with him. Ever tormented by his unrequited love for Katsura, Ichirota finds his hatred of Aohiko deepening as he perceives her feelings. However, conscious of the dark fate that will swallow him up in a few years' time, Aohiko is unable to accept her feelings. Katsura privately vows to bottle up her feelings and protect Aohiko for as long as she lives. Over seven years go by. Thanks to the training of Ichirota and Katsura, Takaya has grown into a strong, tough young man, and Toko into a beautiful, lithe young woman. One day, Risson learns from a hermit called Misen that the secrets of the gods that cannot be seen may lie in Mt. Fuji, a sacred mountain to the east, and Mt. Towada, to the north of Mt. Fuji. Risson then flies off on his own in search of Mt. Fuji. Thanks to Misen's ability to look into the past, Toko learns she has a twin who was kidnapped as a child and has become one of Kiyu's warriors.





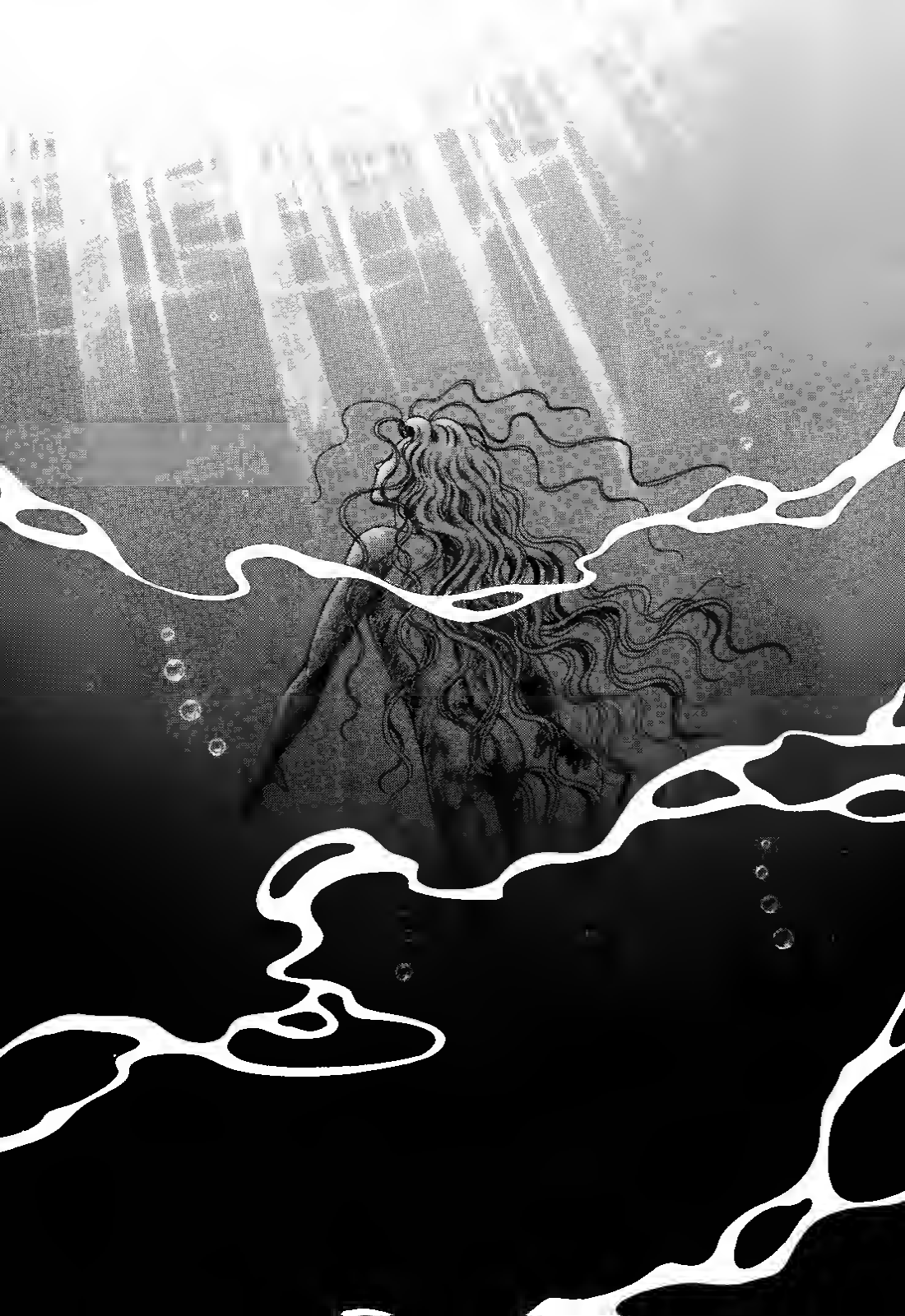
Takaya is kind as ever to Toko in her state of shock, unaware that Toko has come to love him as more than just a brother, and his brotherly kindness is only painful for her. One day, shaken by the appearance of a young woman named Kiriko, Toko finally confesses to Takaya that she has "always been in love" with him, creating a rift between the two. Meanwhile, Aohiko learns that Misen has seen something just like their sacred mirror in a small village that lies beyond four mountains. Aohiko decides to take a trip there while Risson is away. Although Toko had planned to go with Misen, Aohiko and Katsura, Kiriko's death from an illness changes her mind, and she decides to stay and become self-reliant. On her first night alone, she resolves to hide her feelings for Takaya and try to make a fresh start as his sister. At dawn, she visits Kiriko's grave. Worried about Toko's safety, Takaya follows her there. As soon as Toko sees him, however, she is overwhelmed by her feelings and clings to him in tears. The more Toko and Takaya realize how much they need each other, the harder it becomes for them to draw closer or farther apart...

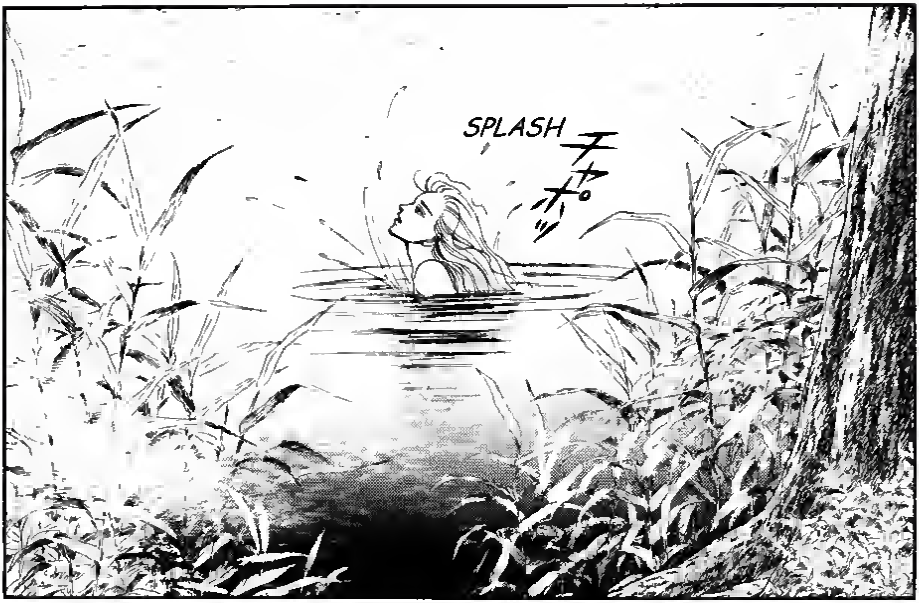
Part II

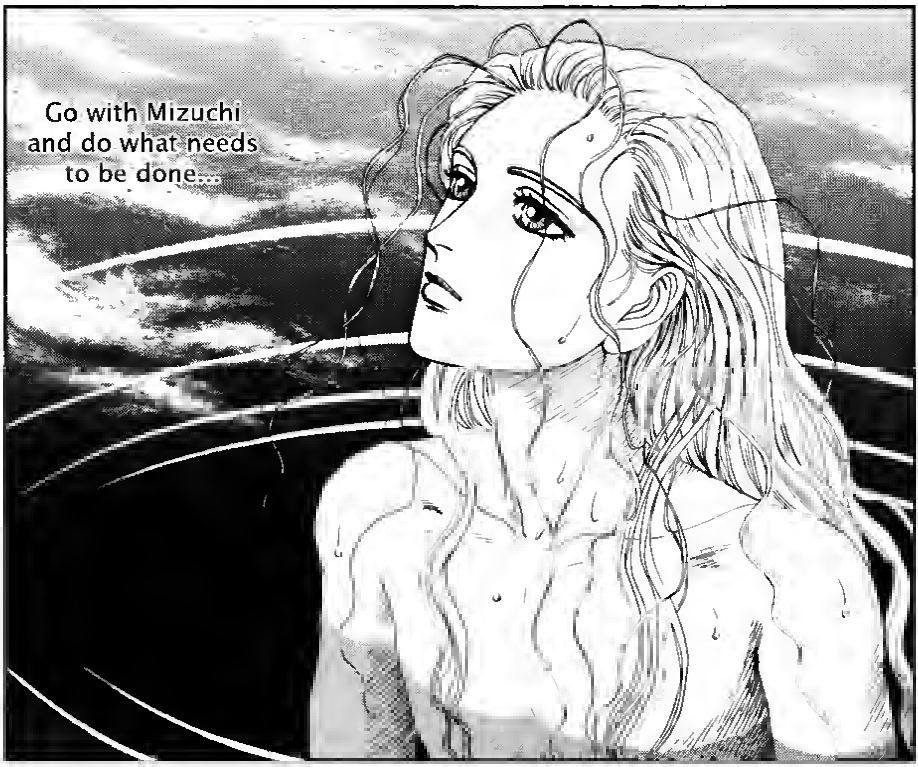
While Toko and Takaya are away from the demigod camp, it is completely surrounded by demon-god warriors. Takaya leaves Toko behind to prevent her and her twin (Yoko) from meeting and joins the battle. Meanwhile, the youth group led by Koma attempts to escape, but demon-god warriors, including Yoko, lie in wait for them. Toko arrives on the scene, as if they were calling out to each other. Yoko's demon headband is triggered, causing her to lose her senses and strike Toko down with her spear. In addition, Ichirota is captured by the demon god Kiyu, Koma is wounded, and Takaya is fatally injured. When she sees Takaya collapse, Yoko faints for some reason. She recognizes his name and his face. Yoko starts recalling a stream of memories that can't be hers--they're Toko's memories! Chief Yoshikage advises the confused Yoko that her real name (identity) will be the name Takaya calls her. The Chief falls on his own sword to prevent Ichirota from killing him. That day, Yoko becomes convinced that she is Toko...

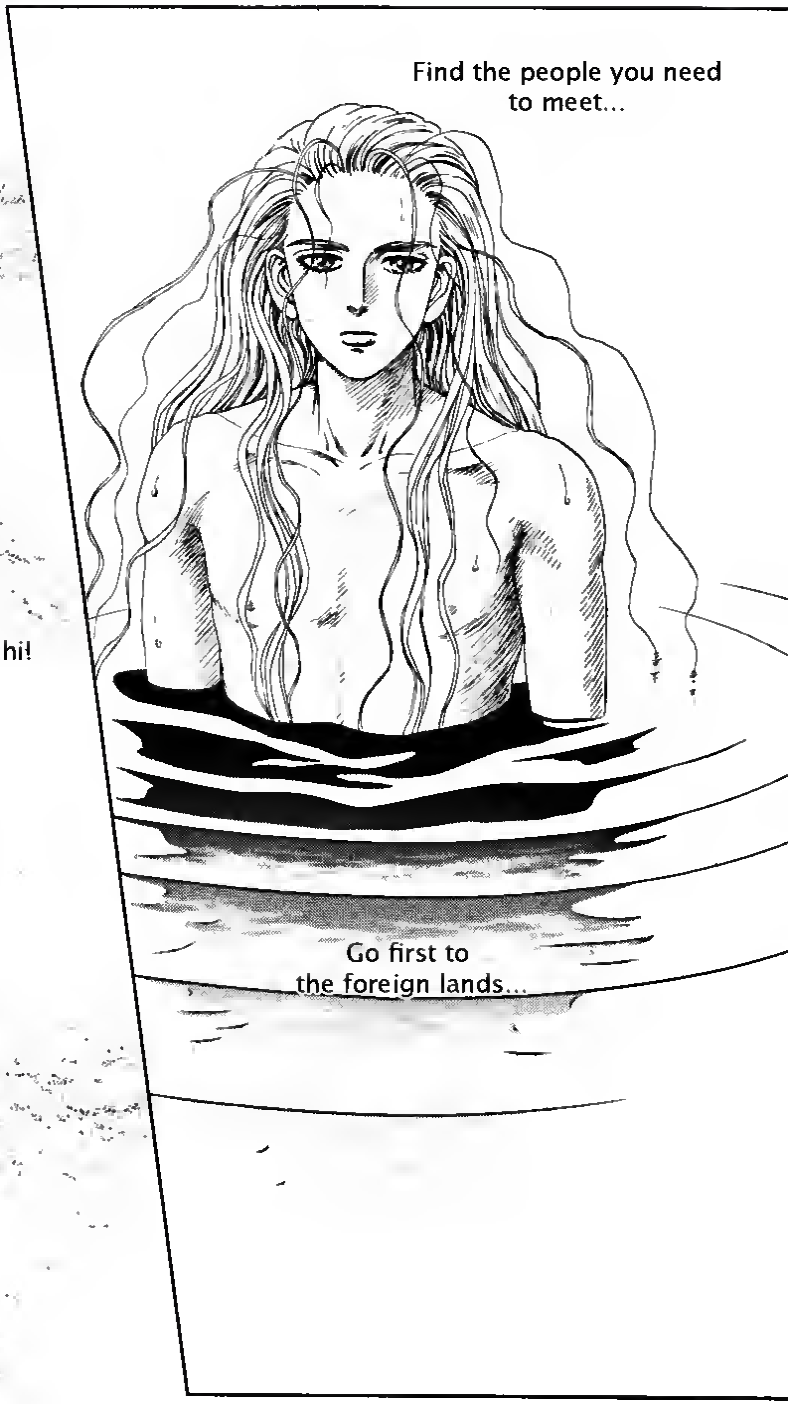
"Mantra: a mysterious spell received from the gods that cannot be seen
Yang stone: a special stone that has positive energy (yin stones have the opposite kind of energy). Its power is manifested through the use of mantras.
Sacred treasures: a sword, a bead necklace made out of yang stones, and a strangely-shaped mirror"

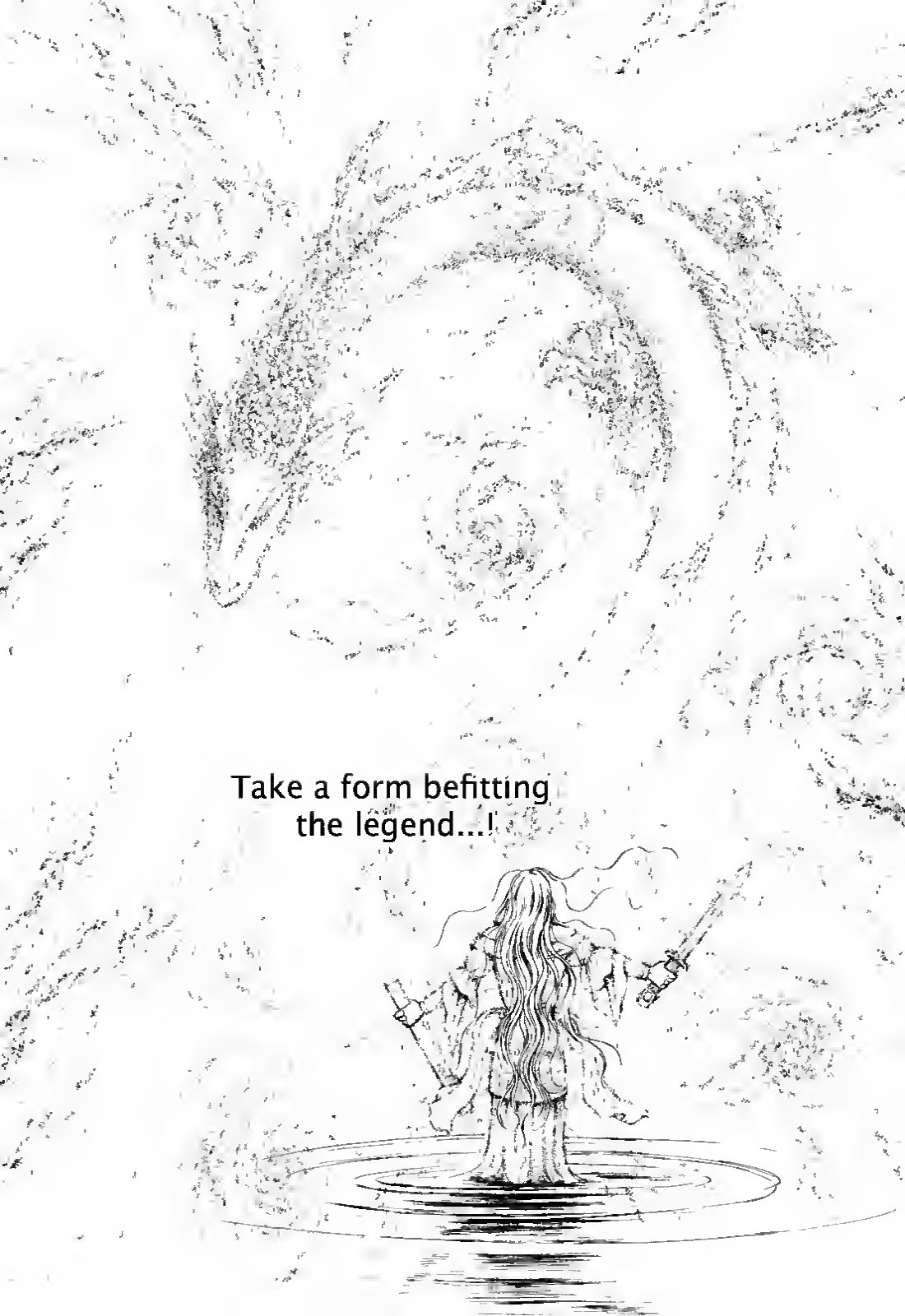
We have [illegible] you Yachio...
Awake...
Child of man [illegible] bears no name...




SPLASH


Go with Mizuchi
and do what needs
to be done...

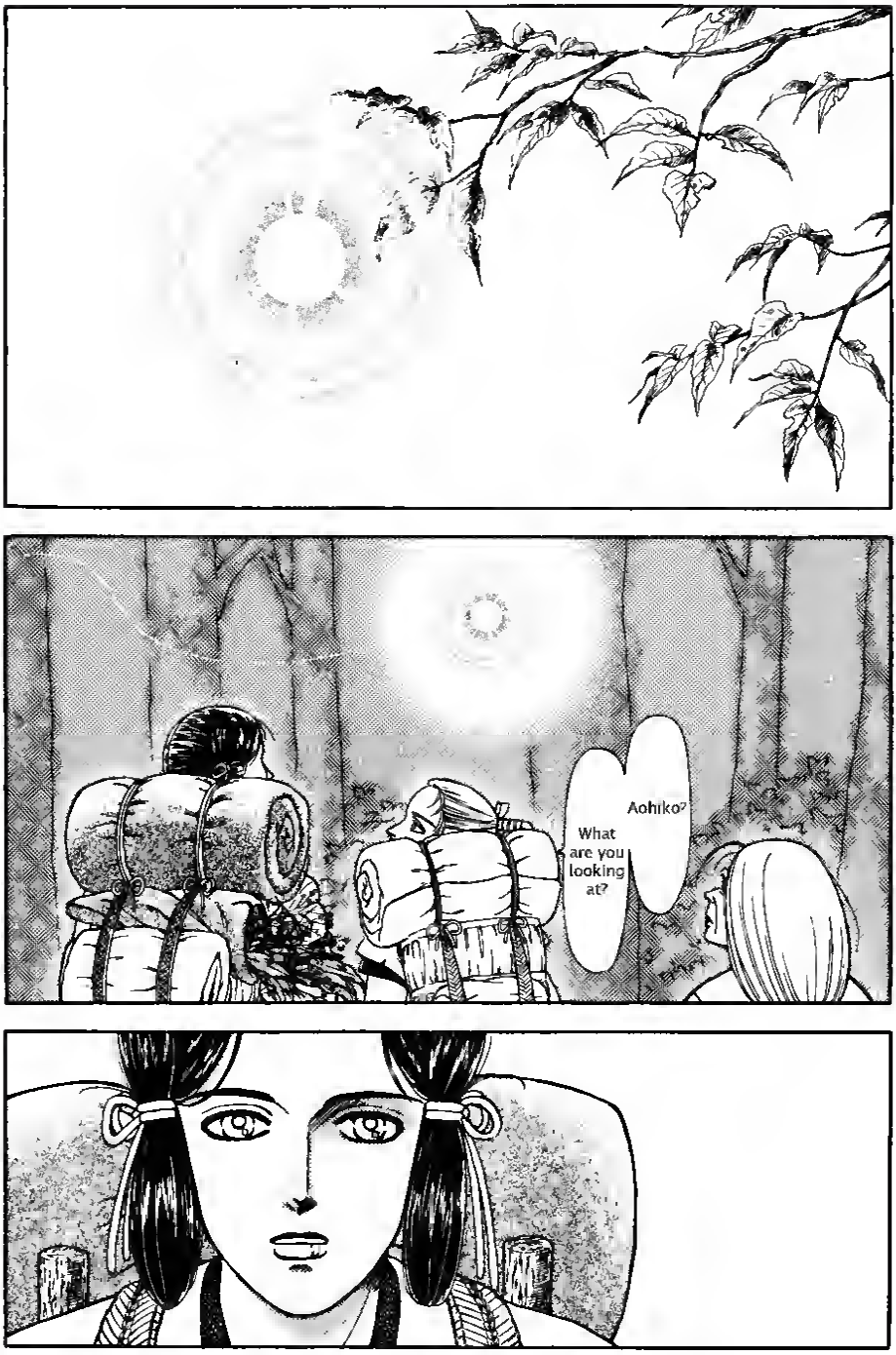

Find the people you need to meet...
Come forth, Mizuchi!
Go first to the foreign lands...


Take a form befitting
the legend...!

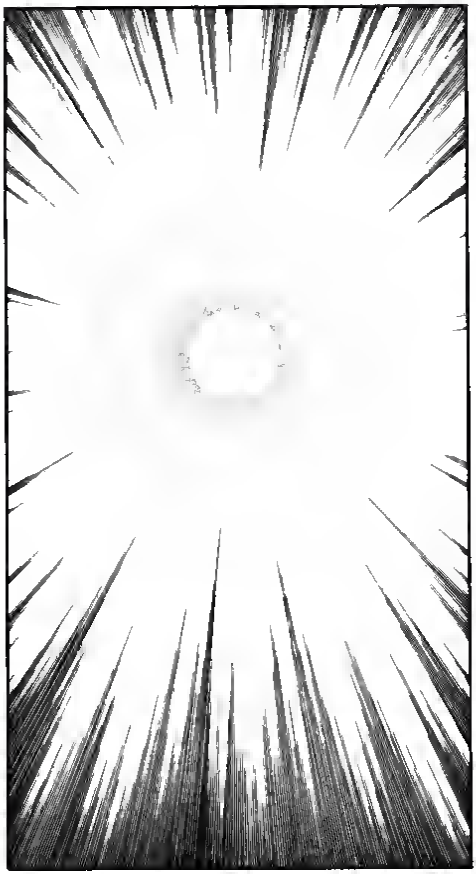
I guess we're lost...
Well ...

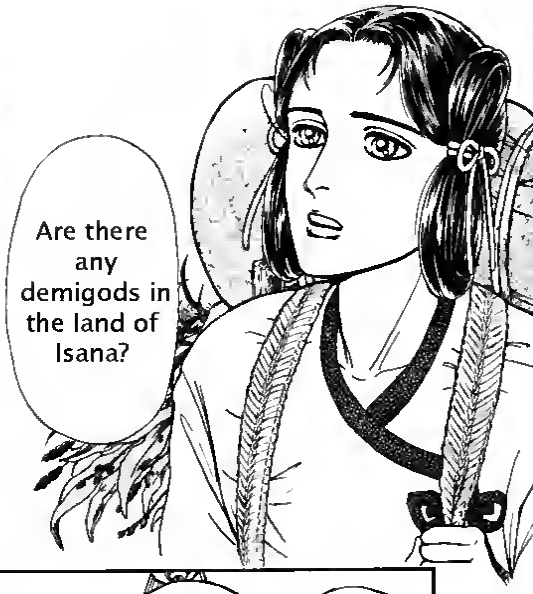
A mantra!? No!
Aohiko, isn't there something you could do with a mantra?
It's been ten years since I visited Isana...
Hmm ...

Look at that!
Misen!
I'm sure we were going the right direction. It should be around here somewhere.


Aohiko?
What are you looking at?

Hm...
What!?
Huh? What!?
Master... That's light emitted by a demigod.
SST
It seems like it's telling us to follow it...

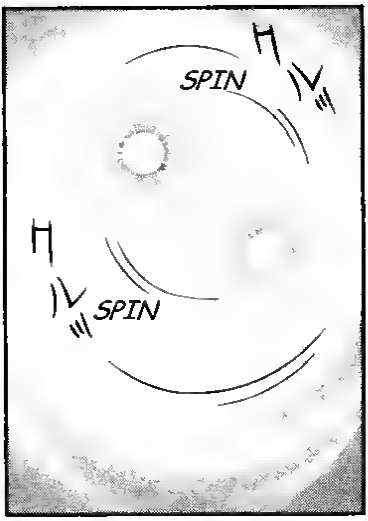


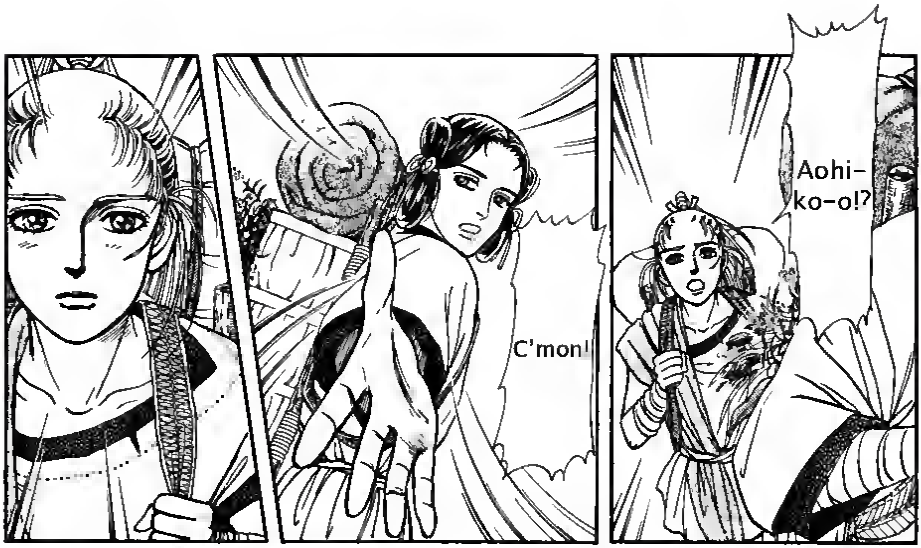

Are there any demigods in the land of Isana?

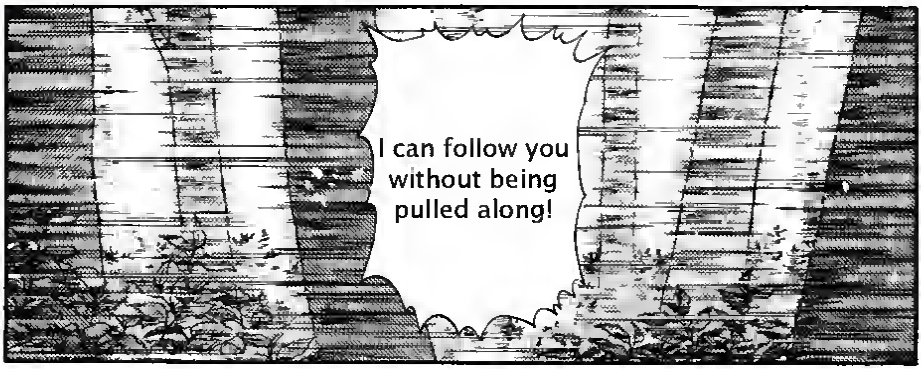
Aohiko!? I can't see anything.
It's not a trap, is it?

Let's go!

It's in a hurry.

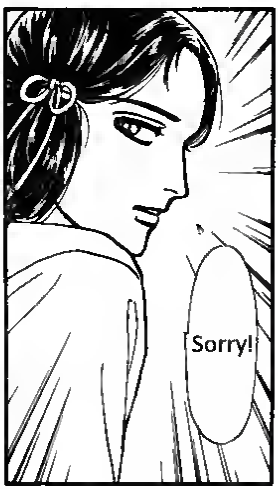

SPIN
SPIN





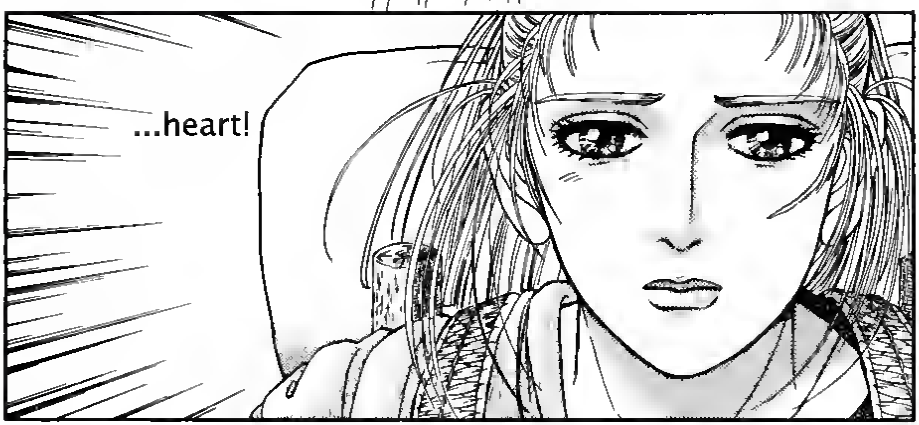
I remember Aohiko's hand...

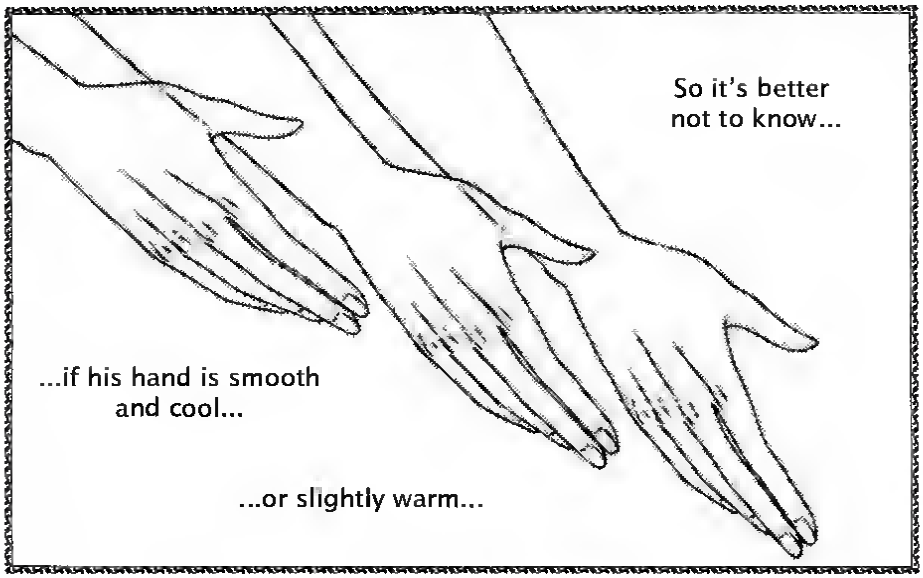
...down to shape of his fingernails...



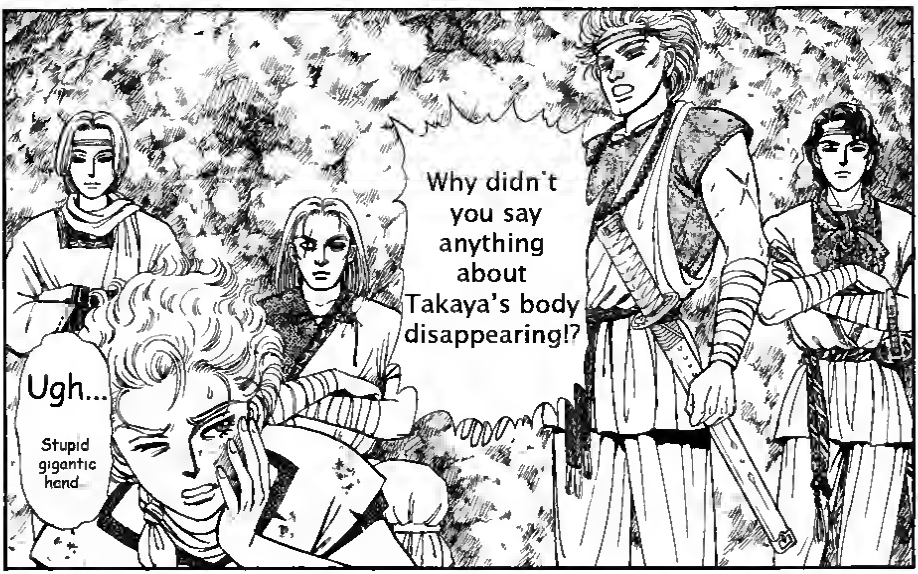
Whatever it is...
his hand, arm, chest, back...

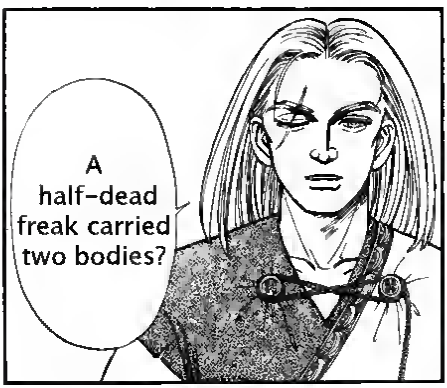
Once I touch it, I'll want
to touch it again and again.





SLAP


Why didn't you say anything about Takaya's body disappearing!?
Ugh...
Stupid gigantic hand


A half-dead freak carried two bodies?

Why!?
Because the guy who carried the bodies was a half-dead freak...

So you were only able to cut his back...
Yes! I cut a deep wound in his back!
Only an idiot exposes his back to the enemy!
HEHE
...and, as I said, there is no way Takaya could have survived his wounds.
Captain!
Leaving this freak aside, the girl that was Yoko's twin was stabbed in the heart...

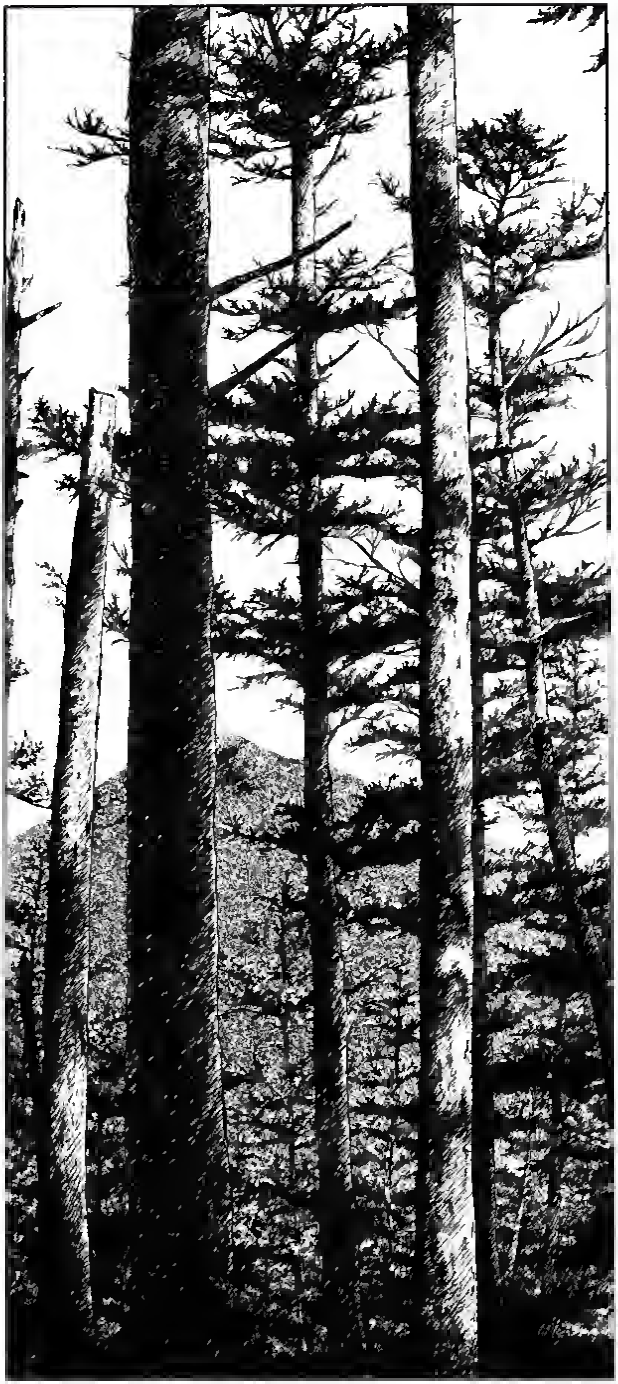
He's that...
...strong of a man?
Next time, you'll have to cut off his head...
...and burn it to ashes.
He's alive...
If only Yoko came back to life after killing Toko...
...he'll cheat death until he kills her.

Interesting! I can't wait to tear him into pieces.
...
I'm the one who trained him into that beautiful, ferocious beast.
Only I can kill Takaya.
He can't have been carried that far.
Find Takaya and behead him before sundown!
If we finish him off before his wounds heal, we can save Nachi the trouble.
Go!
DASH

Don't let her out of your sight!
That's why I keep you close to her.
Uh... Resting. Says she has a headache.
Where's Yoko?
Kai!
Yes sir...
Yoko has oracle blood...
Seems like a lot of fuss over one girl...

That's the official version.
The other half of the story is that everyone is drawn to her incorruptible purity.
She hides it and is reluctant to show us her mysterious abilities, but she must have considerable power.
Kiyu thinks she will prove useful someday in unlocking the secrets of the gods that cannot be seen.
Poor girl.
She came back to life!
...wound on your wrist?
How's the...
...

It's just a scratch.
Should be healed up in ten days.
It's a shame he had to die...
Did he think falling on his own sword would break my heart?
Don't make me laugh...

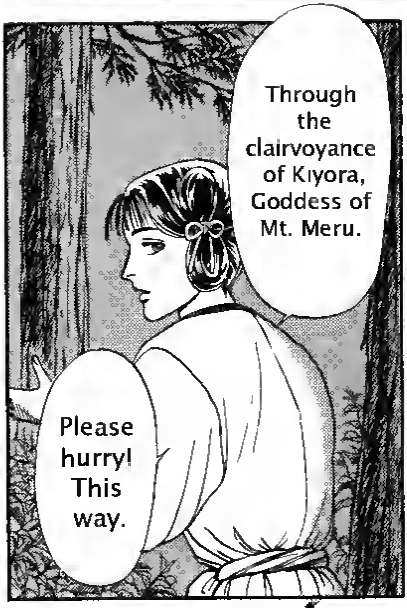


I don't have a heart to break anymore.

RUSTLE
Takaya!
RUSTLE
If you're alive,
call my name!

...I'm sure
I'll be able to find you!
PANT
PANT
If you
call me...
Takaya!

The light disappeared...
What is it? Aohiko!?
GASP
Aohiko! Get back!
Who goes there!?

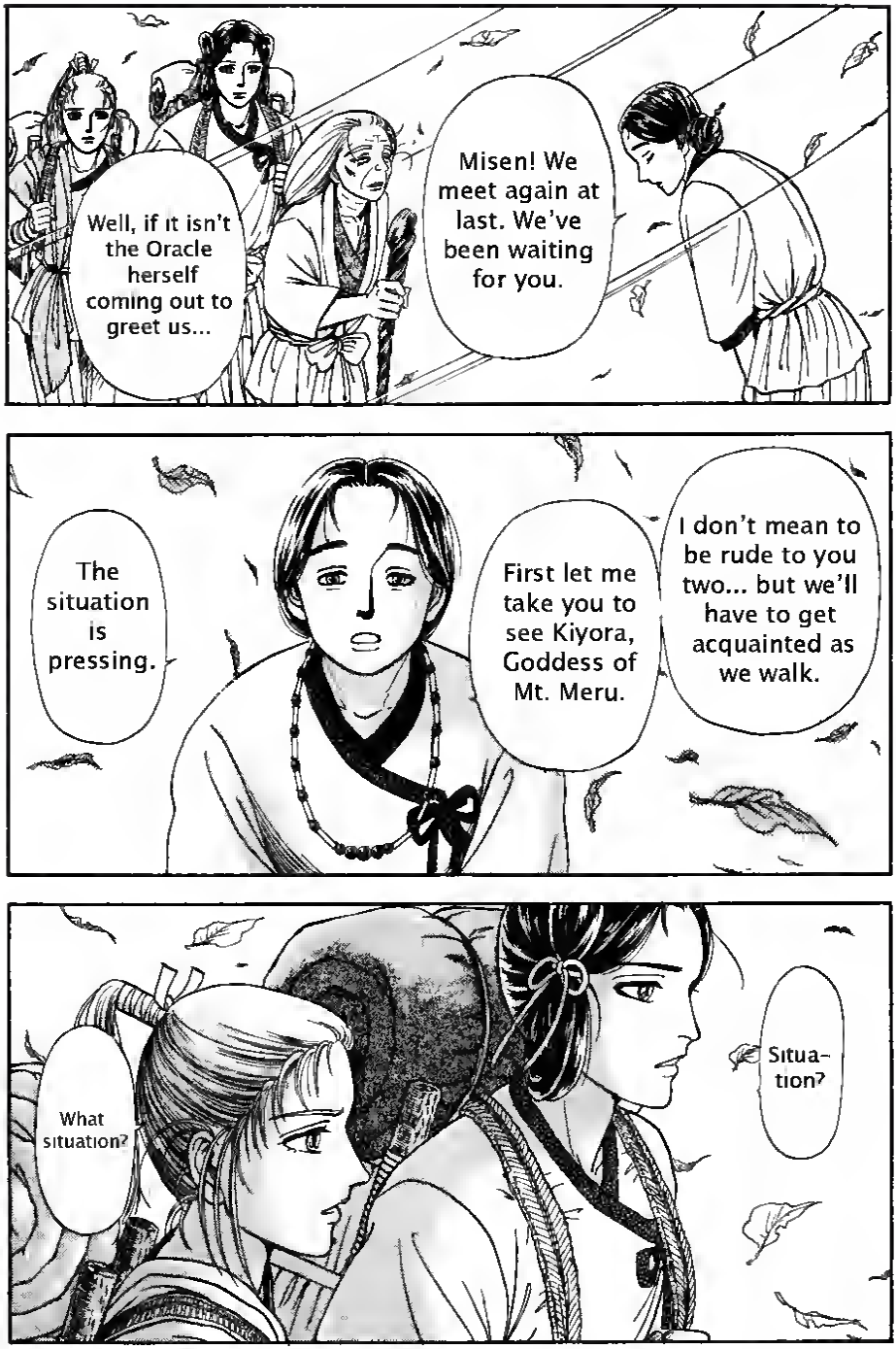


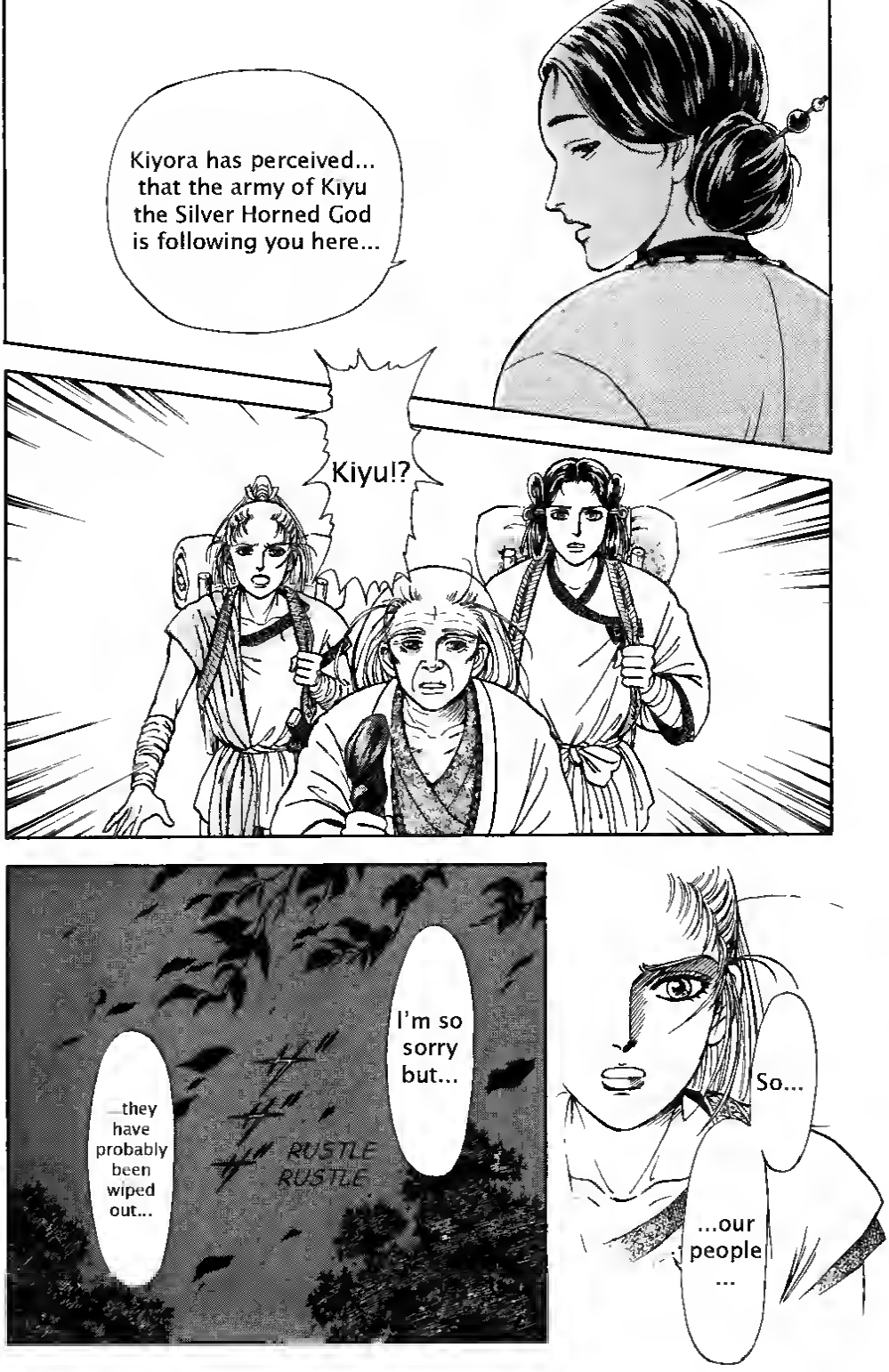
So there is a demigod in Isana.

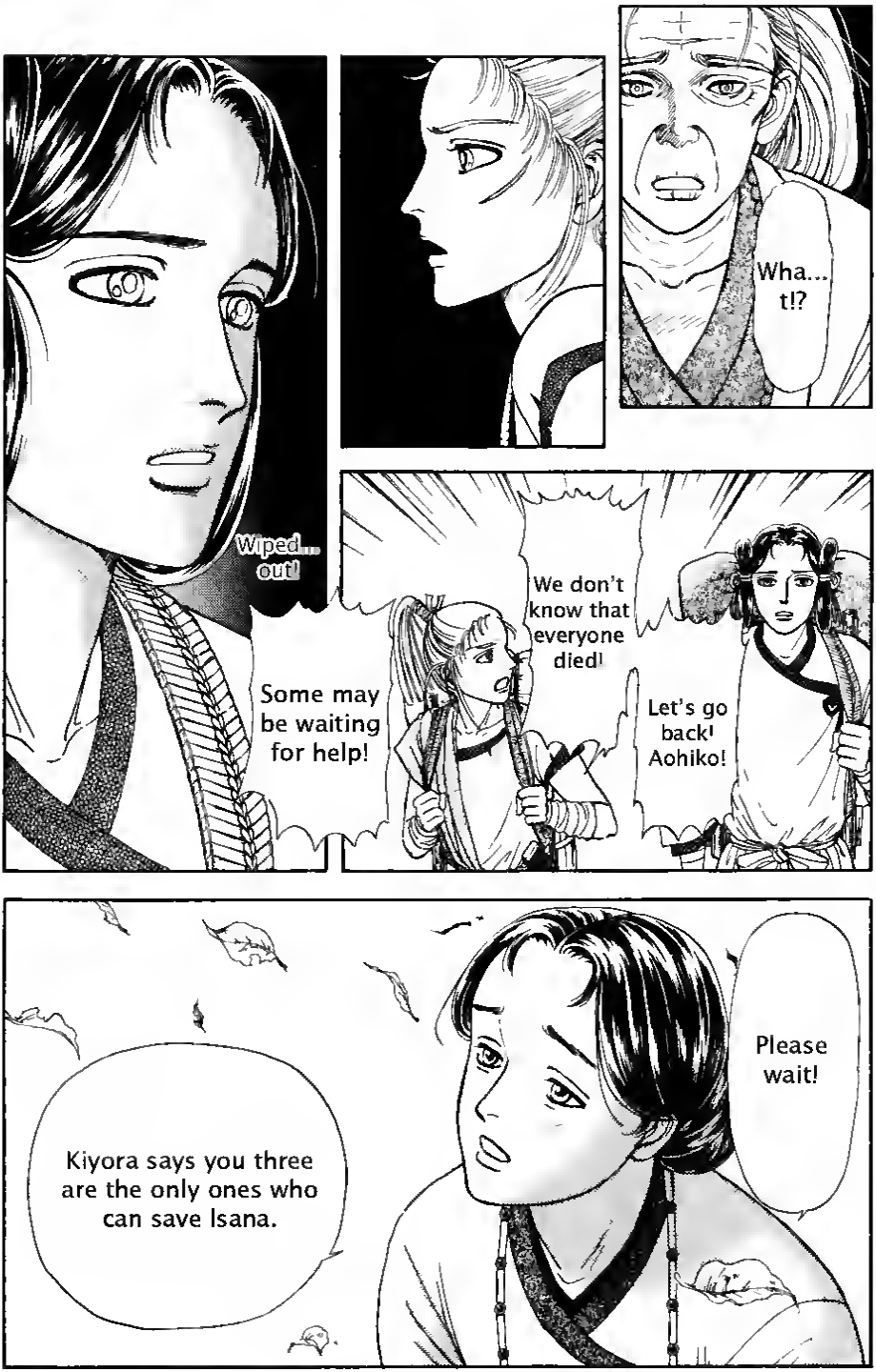
Yes...

BOW
BOW

There's a sense of heaviness in the air...
Yes... it's an old tribe of the gods that cannot be seen.
All the men have their hair tied.

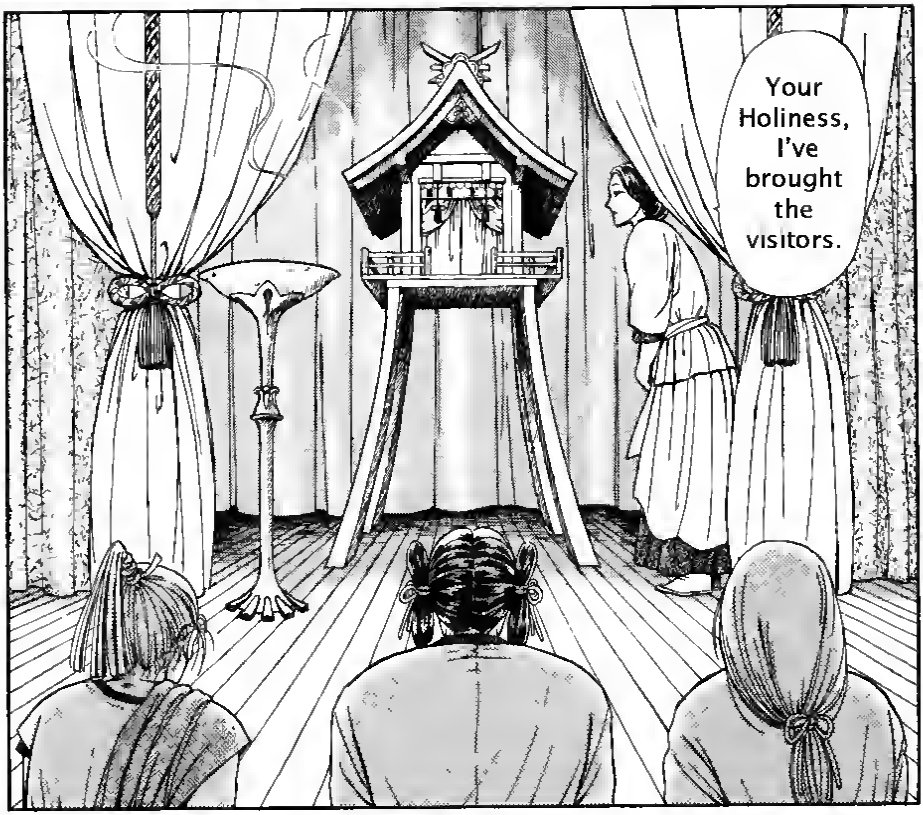

Well, if it isn't the Oracle herself coming out to greet us...
Misen! We meet again at last. We've been waiting for you.
The situation is pressing.
First let me take you to see Kiyora, Goddess of Mt. Meru.
I don't mean to be rude to you two... but we'll have to get acquainted as we walk.
What situation?
Situation?


Kiyora has perceived... that the army of Kiyu the Silver Horned God is following you here...
Kiyu!?
I'm so sorry but...
...they have probably been wiped out...
RUSTLE RUSTLE
So...
...our people ...


Wha... t!?
Wiped... out!
We don't know that everyone died!
Some may be waiting for help!
Let's go back! Aohiko!
Please wait!
Kiyora says you three are the only ones who can save Isana.

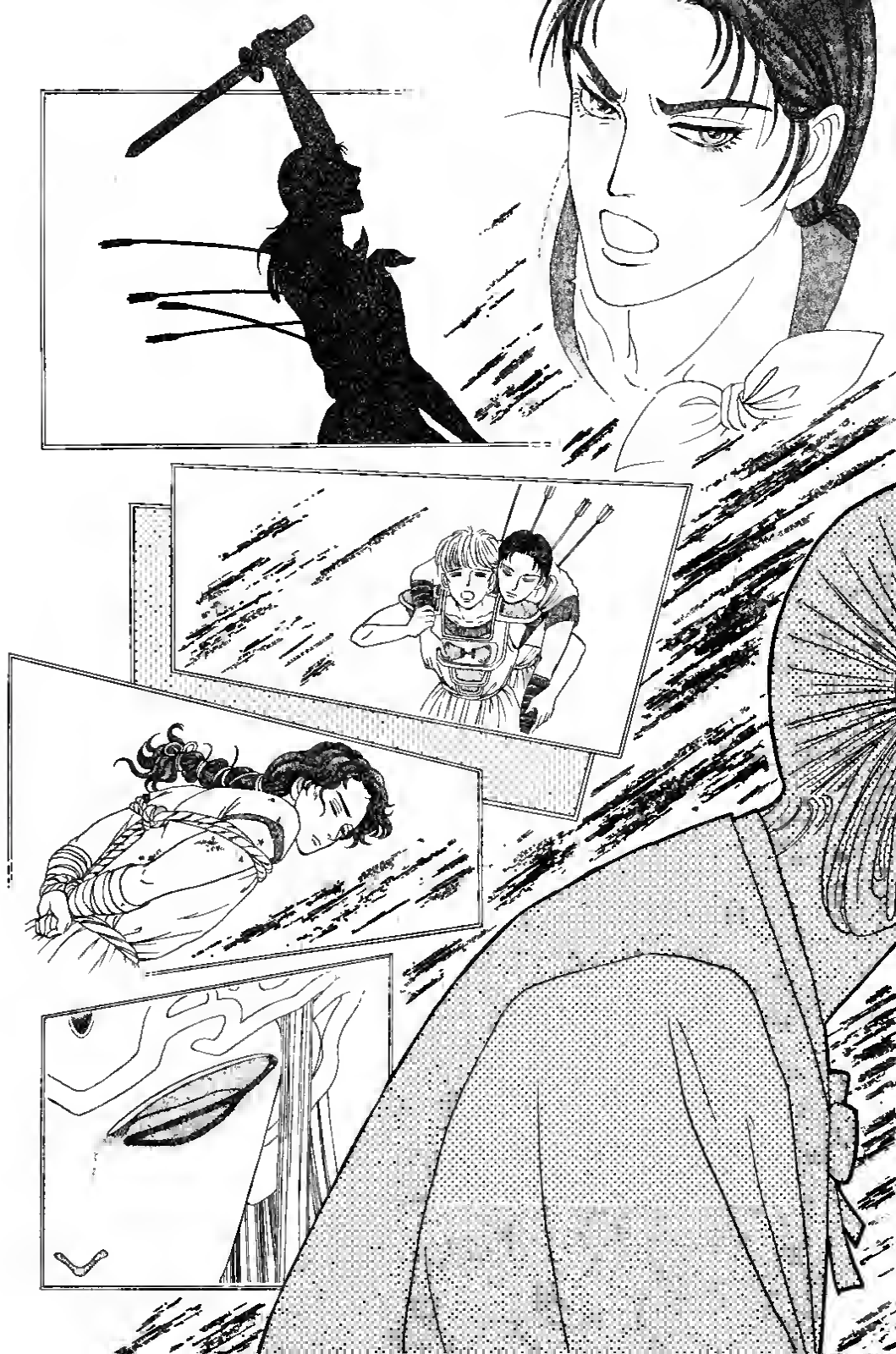
But still...
...we may have friends who are dying.
Aohiko!
Let's go see Kiyora...
If Kiyu's army is following us here, it's our...
...I mean, my duty.

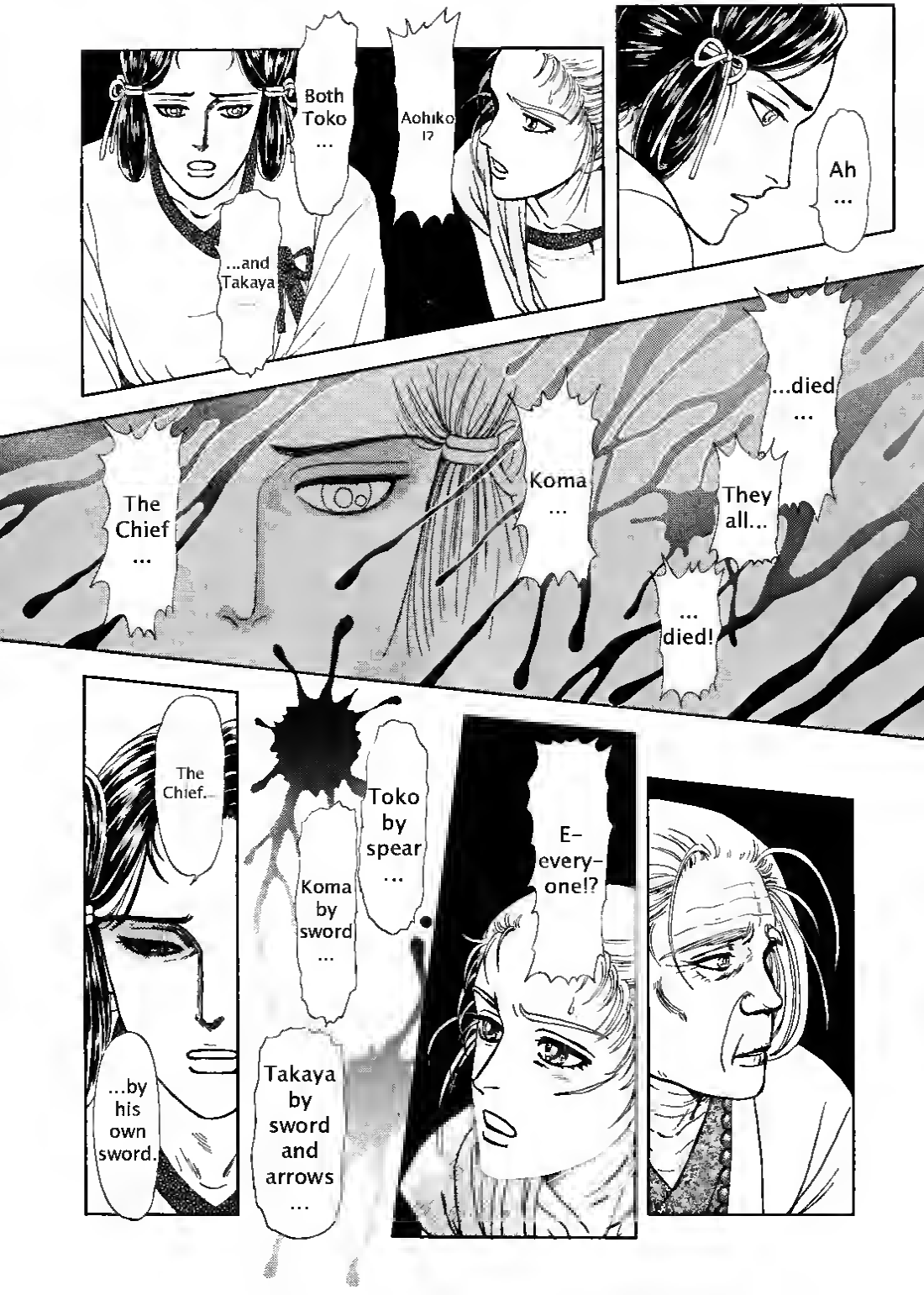
Ichirota ...
... Koma and ...
And the Chief and...
Aren't you worried about Toko and Takaya!?
If it's Kiyu's army, Toko's twin must be with them!
No use!? So, what? You're fine with abandoning them!?
There's no using talking about it right now.
Stop, Katsura ...
Lead the way, Oracle.
Aohiko feels the same way.
Calm down, Katsura.

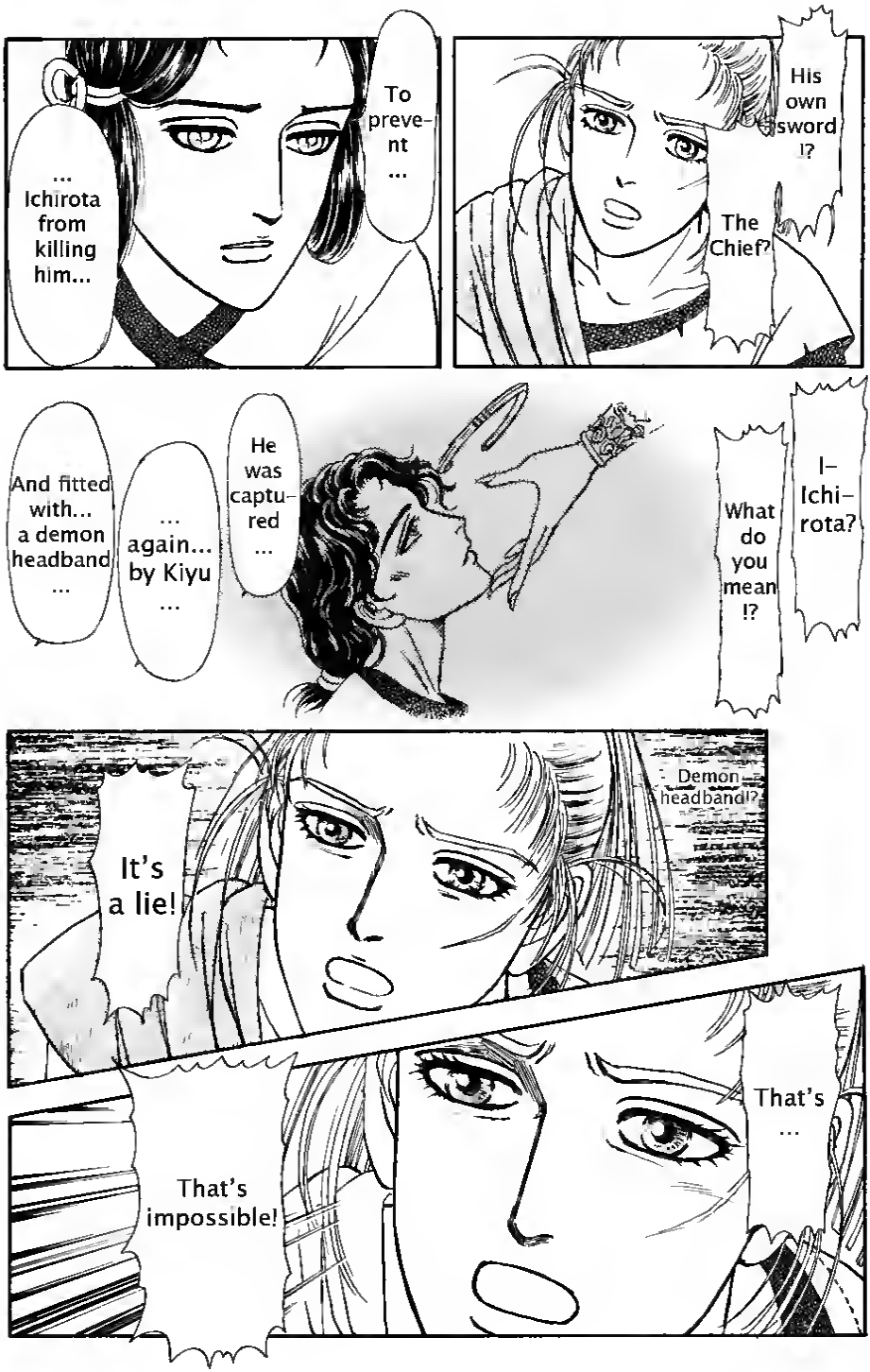

Your Holiness, I've brought the visitors.

She's in that tiny shrine?
I'm glad you stayed and came to see me.
Before we get to that, please share with us what you saw, Your Holiness.
Only you can save the people of Isana from Kiyu's army.
It's natural for you to be worried about your people.

I suppose it would be better to show you exactly what I saw than explain it in words.
Who shall I show it to?
I'll volunteer.
Please choose the parts you would like to see.
...we can't afford to go through everything.
Now that time is of the es-sence ...

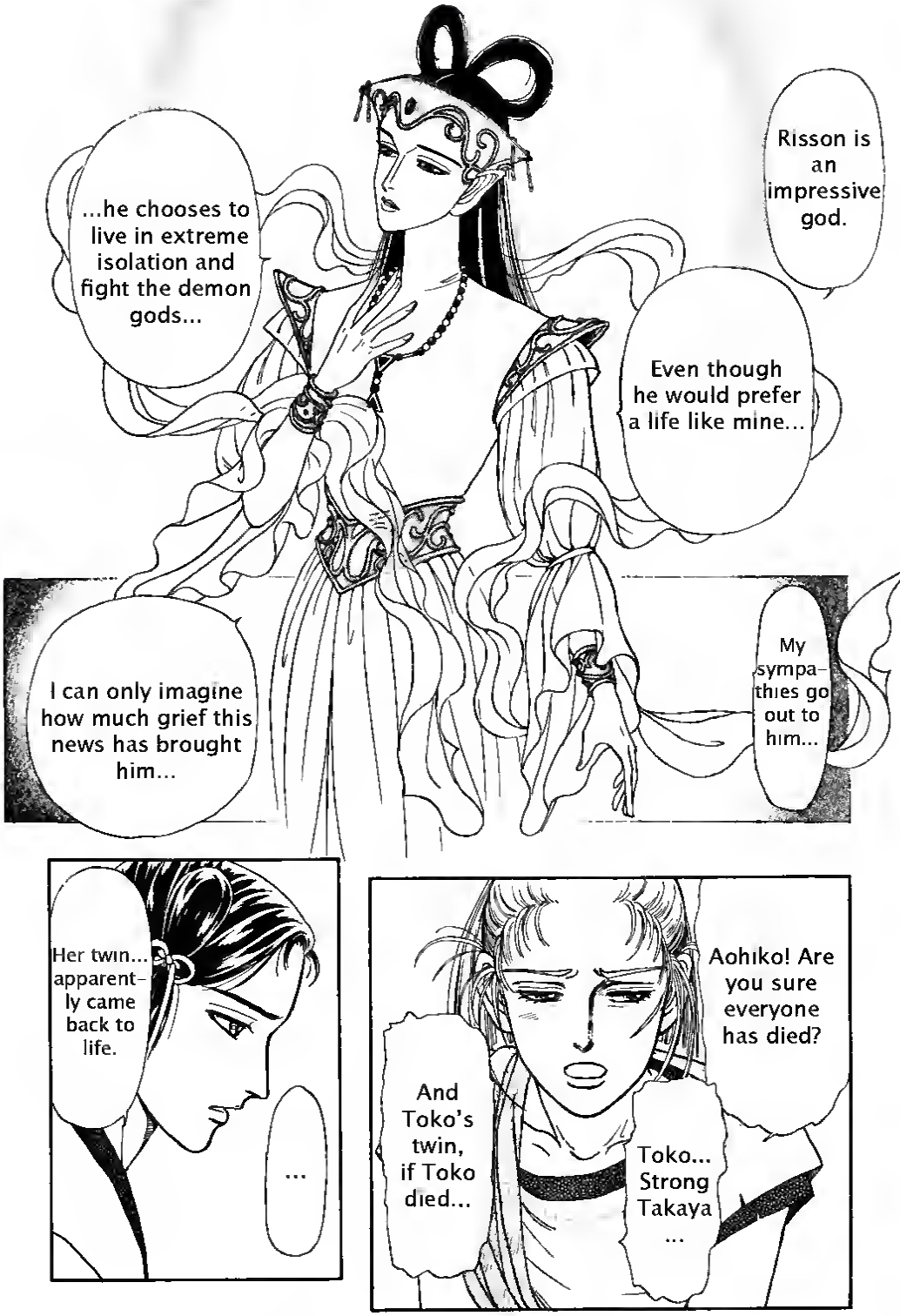


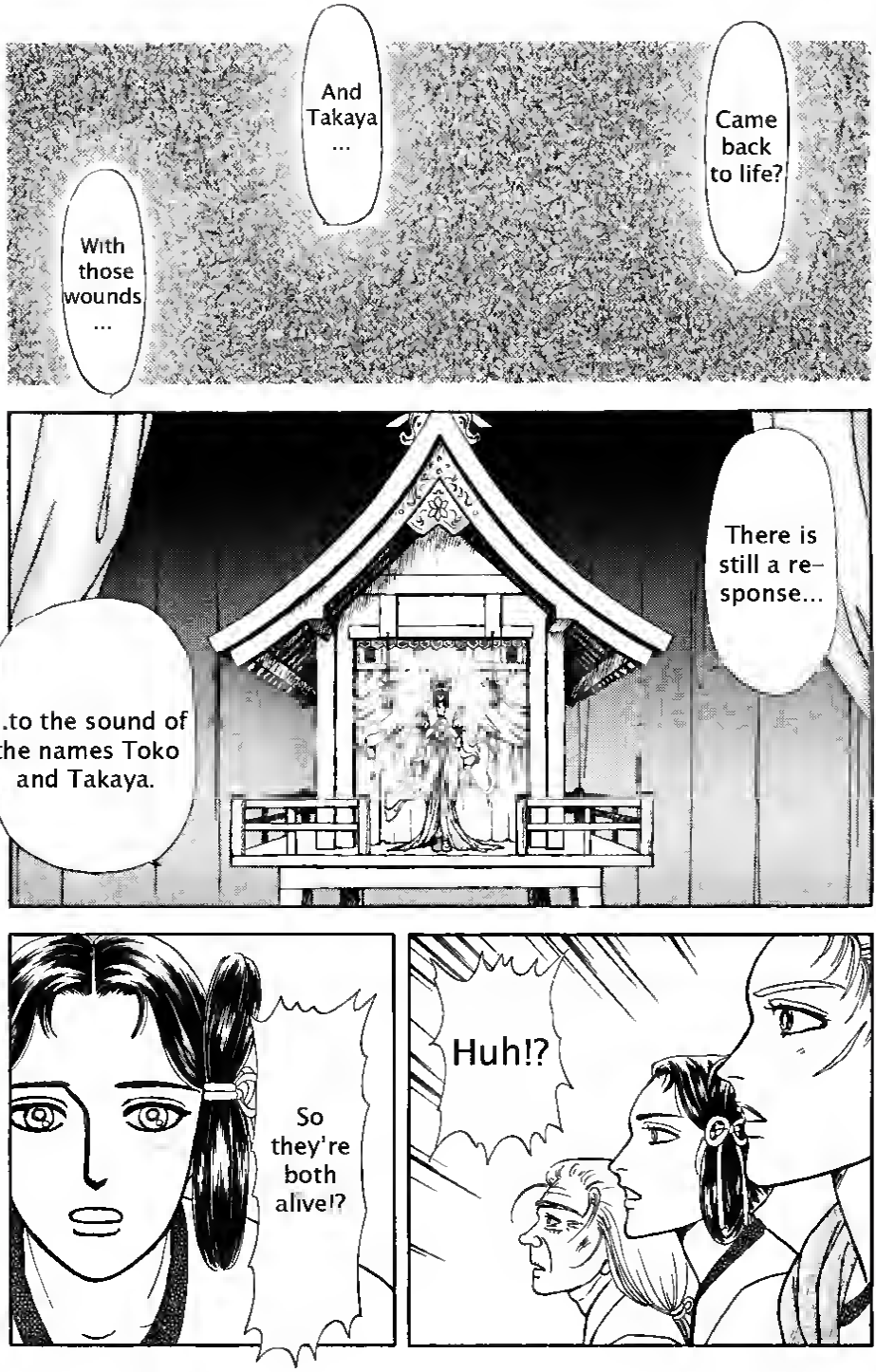

Both Toko ...
...and Takaya
Aohiko !?
Ah ...
The Chief ...
Koma ...
They all...
...died ...
... died!
The Chief...
...by his own sword.
Toko by spear ...
Koma by sword ...
Takaya by sword and arrows ...
E-every-one!?

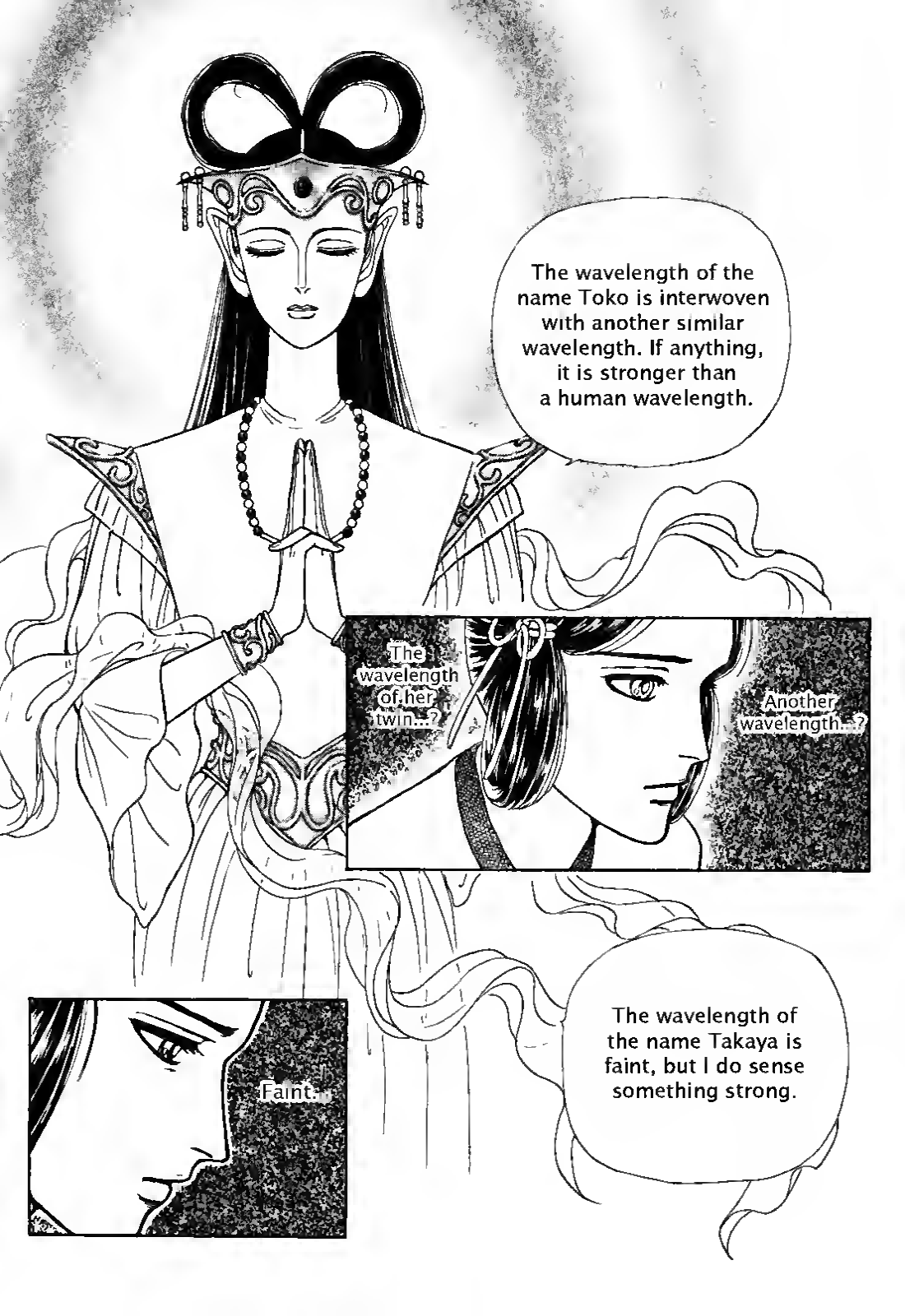

To prevent ...
... Ichirota from killing him...
His own sword !?
The Chief?
I– Ichirota?
What do you mean !?
He was captured ...
... again... by Kiyu ...
And fitted with... a demon headband ...
Demon headband!?
It's a lie!
That's ...
That's impossible!

You knew Risson had left us, didn't you?
Your Holiness! Why didn't you save them?
...the tragic battle unfold like that!?
You just watched...
...
I can't even save Isana...
I only have a little bit of power left.

Five years ago, this land was struck by a terrible epidemic.
When the entire tribe was bedridden with the illness, Kiyora came to our rescue.
Healing people requires more psychic power than any other superhuman feat.
Ah...
Risson does not heal people, does he...?
If he did, he would not have enough power to destroy demon gods.
Demigods are not gods of war.
They are tranquil gods who wish to take care of people, heal sickness, and coexist with people in peace.


Risson is an impressive god.
...he chooses to live in extreme isolation and fight the demon gods...
Even though he would prefer a life like mine...
I can only imagine how much grief this news has brought him...
My sympathies go out to him...
Her twin... apparently came back to life.
...
Aohiko! Are you sure everyone has died?
And Toko's twin, if Toko died...
Toko... Strong Takaya ...


With those wounds ...
And Takaya ...
Came back to life?
...to the sound of the names Toko and Takaya.
There is still a re-sponse...
So they're both alive!?
Huh!?

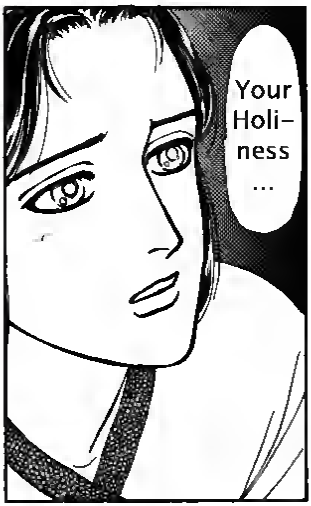

The wavelength of the name Toko is interwoven with another similar wavelength. If anything, it is stronger than a human wavelength.
The wavelength of her twin...?
Another wavelength...?
The wavelength of the name Takaya is faint, but I do sense something strong.
Faint...

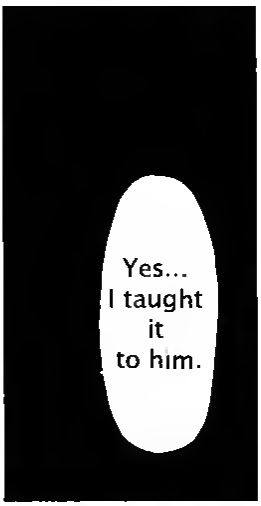
If they find him today or tomorrow, he won't stand a chance...
If what I saw is true, not even Takaya will be able to move for the time being...
If I can be of any service, I will defend the people of Isana with my life
Your Holi-ness ...
Please make it so he can move.
Please save Takaya.

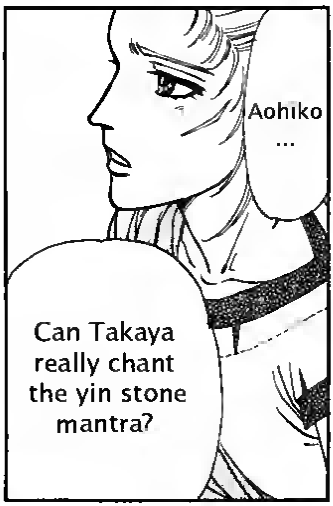
Aohiko
...
You know about yin stones, don't you?
...
So you'd like to use the power of the yin stone on Kiyu's army...
Isana has a yin stone with tremendous power.
...I haven't been able to chant mantras since I lost my voice in the epidemic five years ago.
As the Oracle, I should perform that role, but...

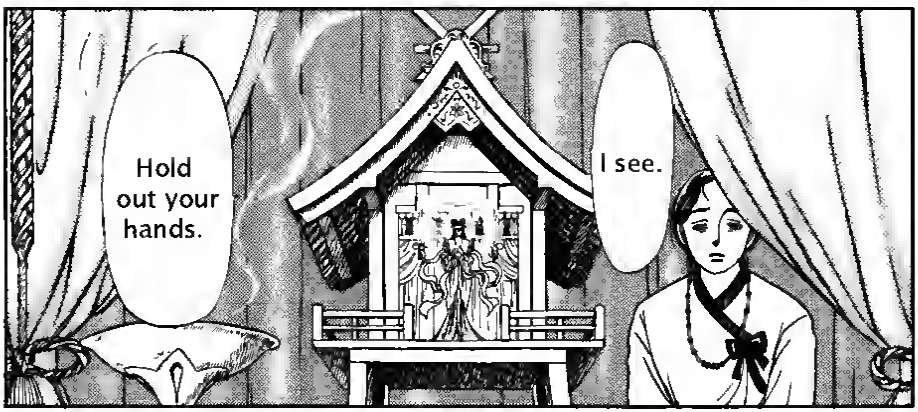
Kiyora plans to save the life of the person who chants the mantra for us.
As you know, a yin stone mantra depletes the life force of the person who chants it.
Misen.
With all due respect, the large number of targets would overtax you.
Your courage is admirable, but the yin stone mantra would put too much of a burden on your elderly body.
I'll chant the yin stone mantra.
This old body doesn't have many years left... and I've lived long enough...

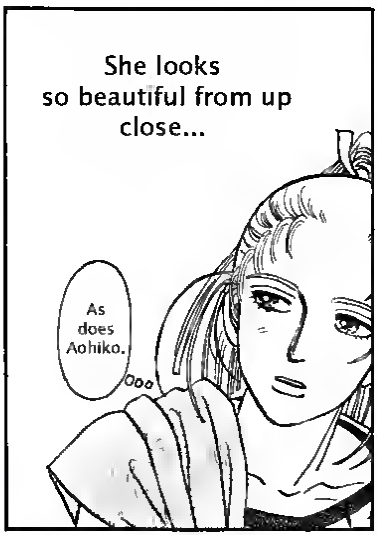
He too has a good command of the mantras.
If he can move, he'll hurry over here and lend me a hand.
Please save Takaya.
Your Holiness ..

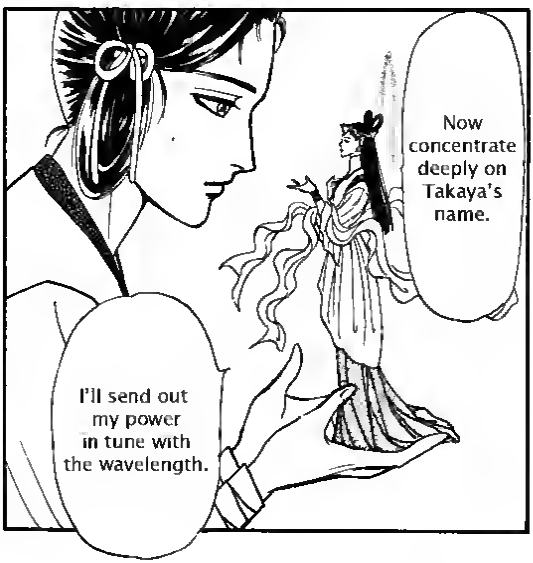

Your Holiness ...

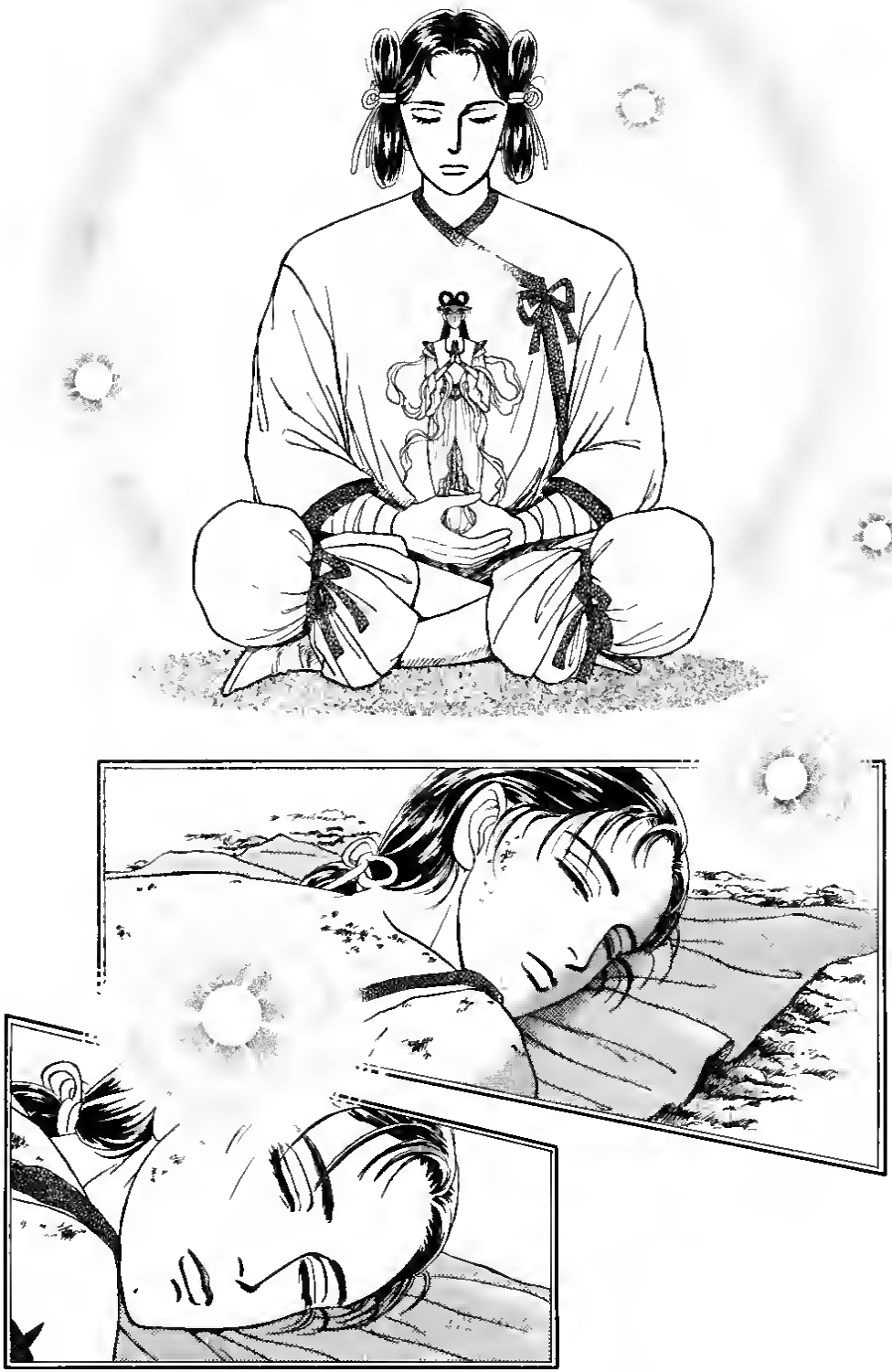

Yes... I taught it to him.


Aohiko ...
Can Takaya really chant the yin stone mantra?


Hold out your hands.
I see.

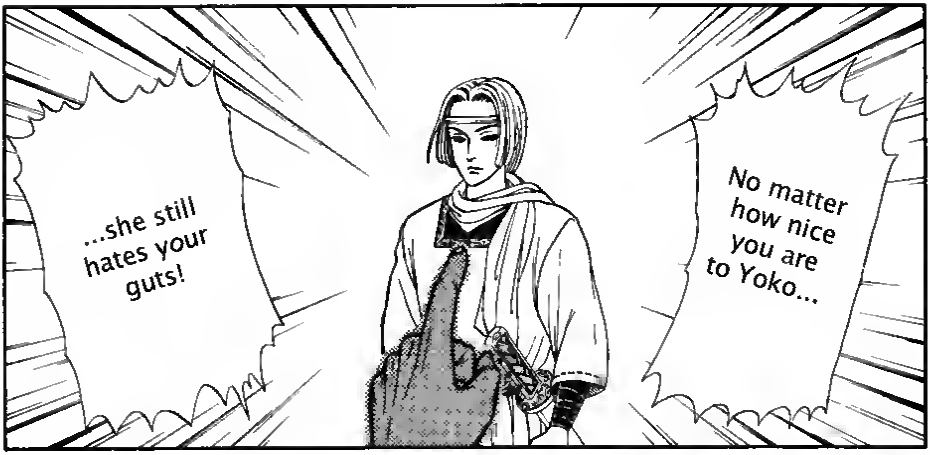

She looks so beautiful from up close...
As does Aohiko.
ODD

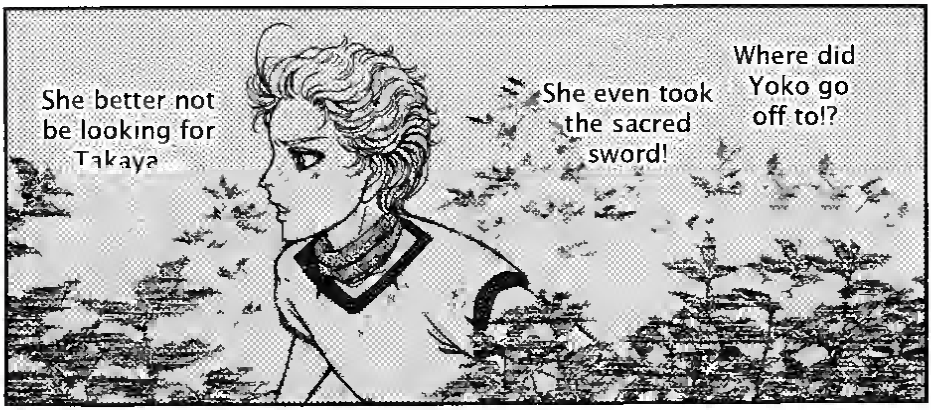

Now concentrate deeply on Takaya's name.
I'll send out my power in tune with the wavelength.



PANT
PANT
I hear Yoko is resting with a headache.
in particu-lar...
No one...
JOLT
Who are you looking for, Kail?

You better find her and bring her back by then...
We're leaving tomorrow morning!
Ow-ow-ow-ow
In the woods? Up in a tree!?
Where is she resting, huh?
...with your eyes and nose of an animal!
You jerk!
No human has a mane or the night vision of an owl.
I'm human!

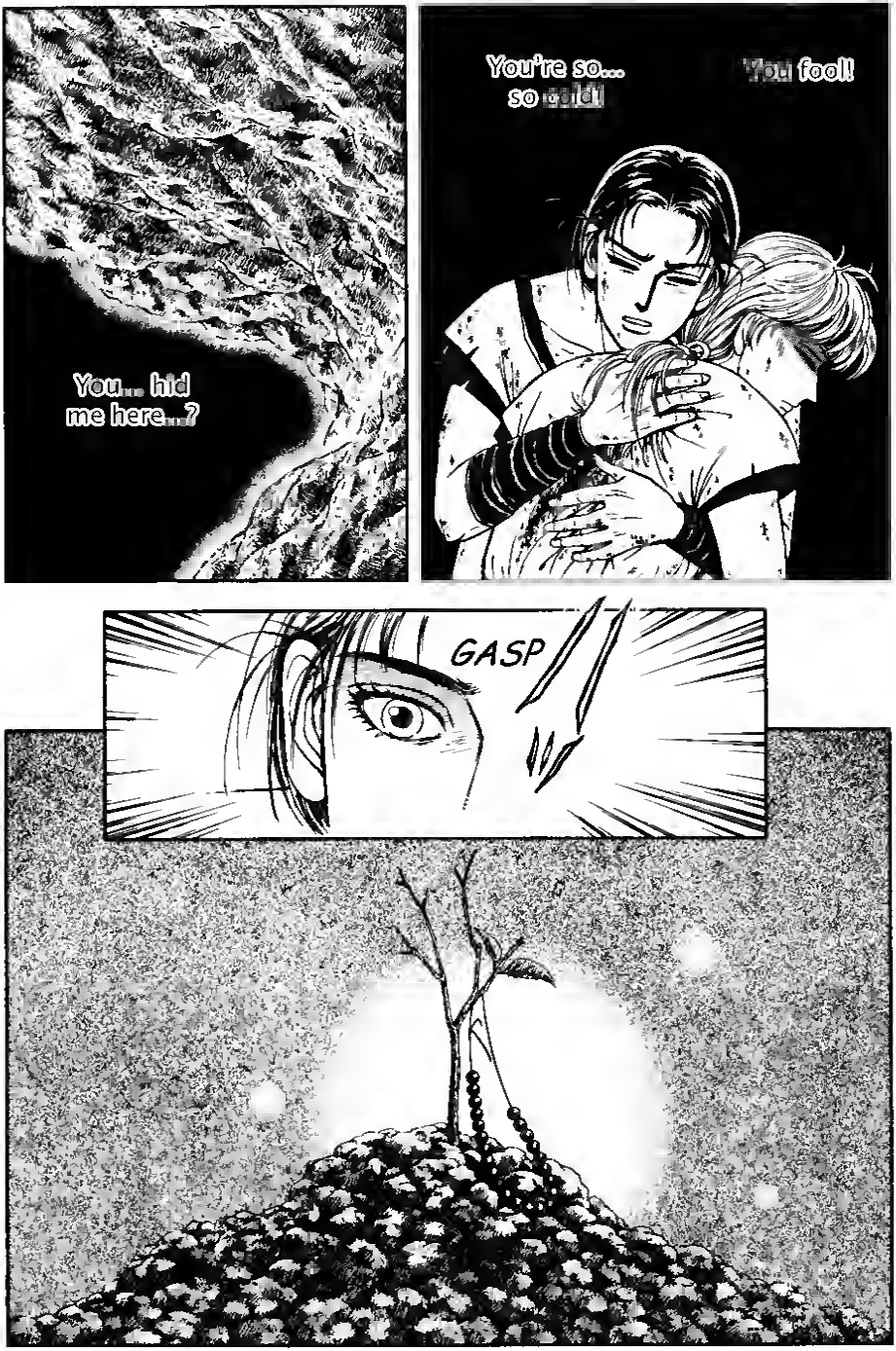

...she still hates your guts!
No matter how nice you are to Yoko...

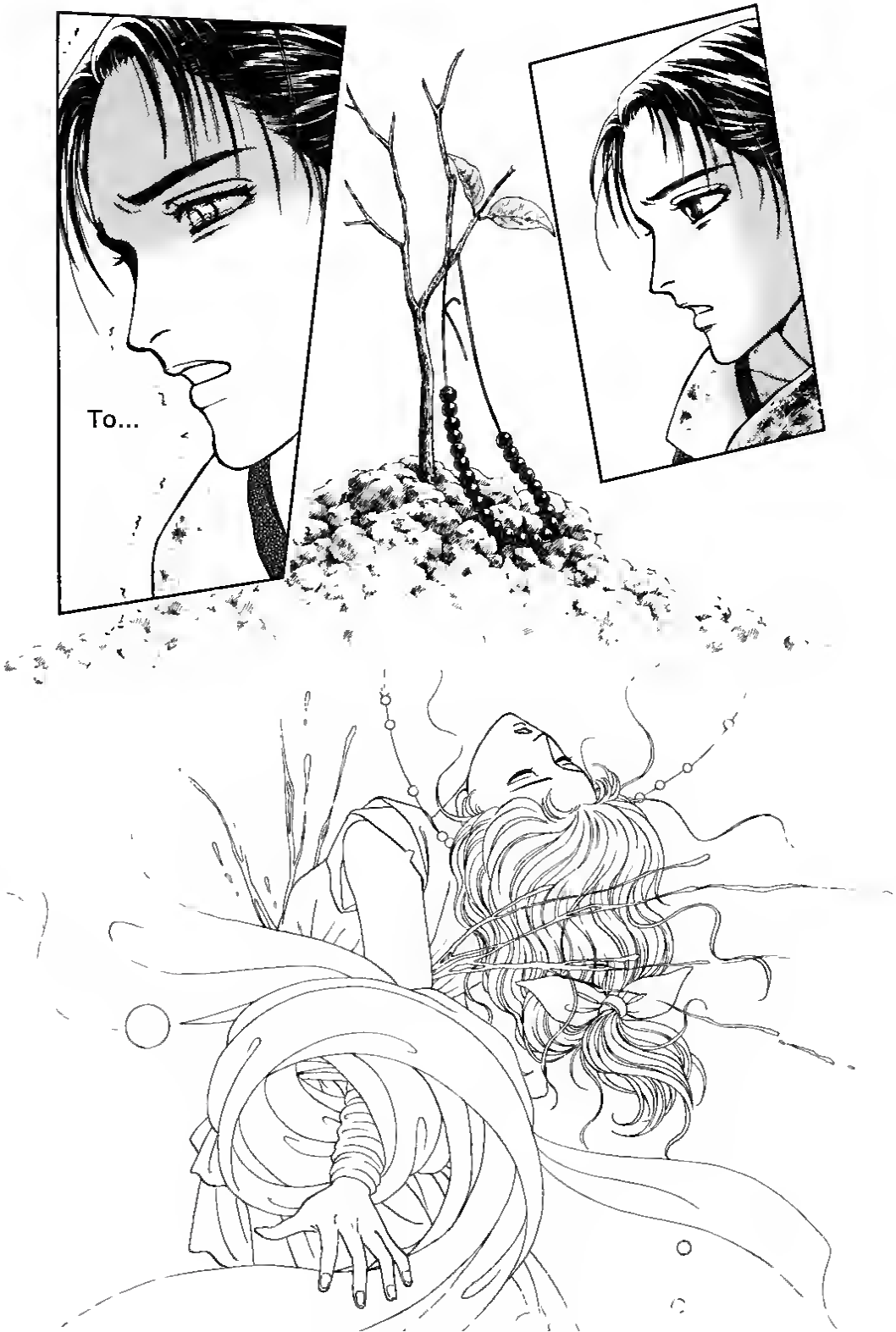

She better not be looking for Takaya
She even took the sacred sword!
Where did Yoko go off to!?

If that guy's actually alive...
What's gotten into you?
Why would you do this!?

...he's gonna
kill you!
Koma!?

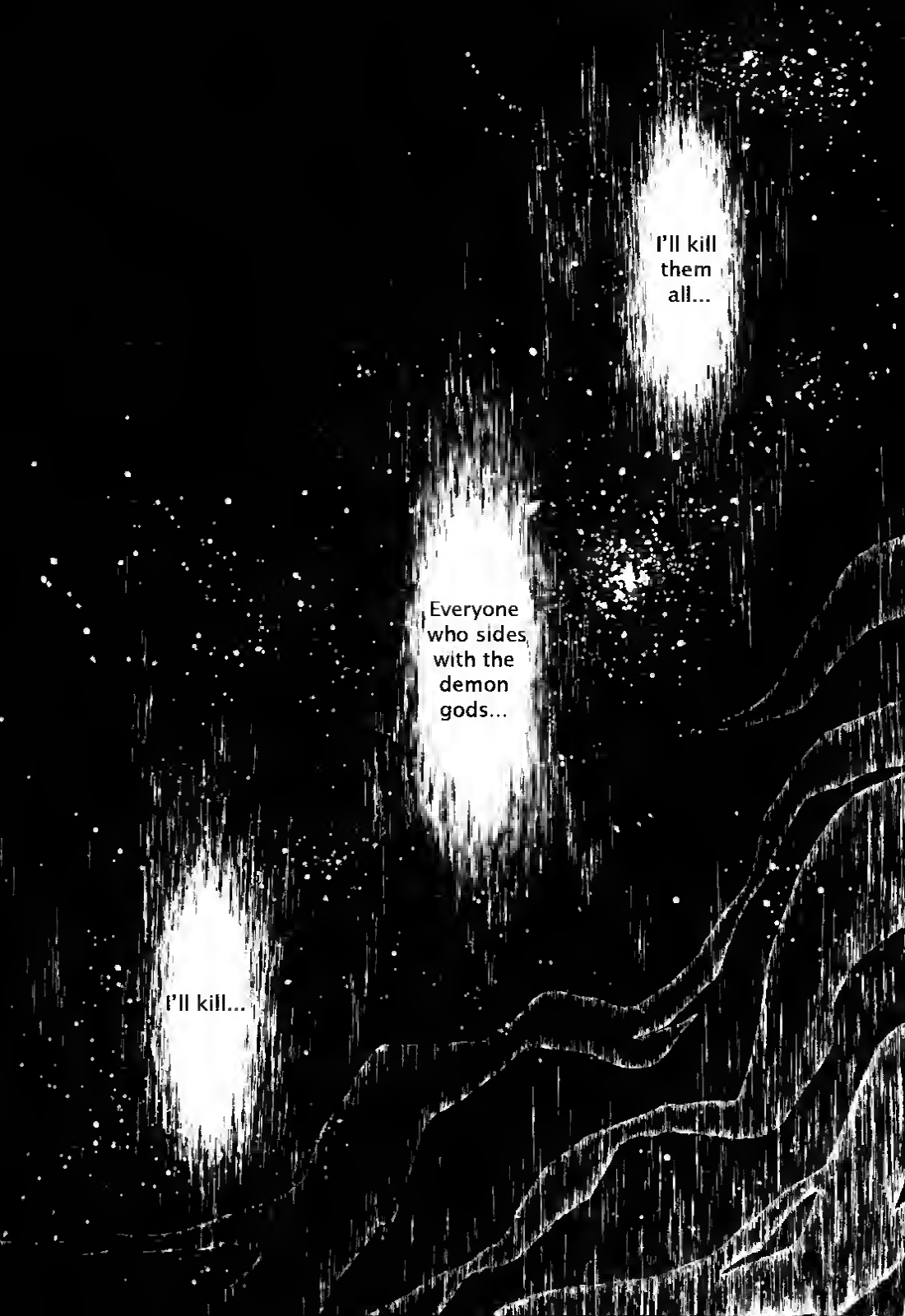
Koma...
Komaa!
Koma!
Koma...
Koma...

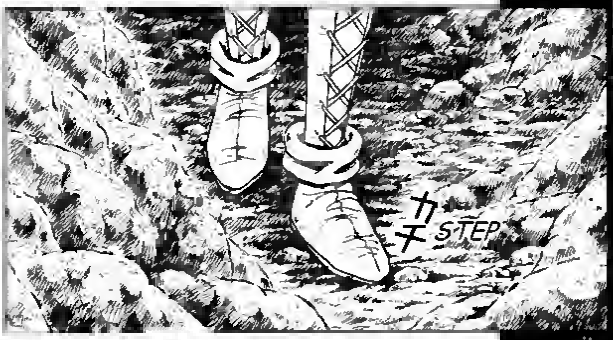

You... hid me here...?
You're so... so cold!
You fool!
GASP


To...

To...ko...
TOKO!

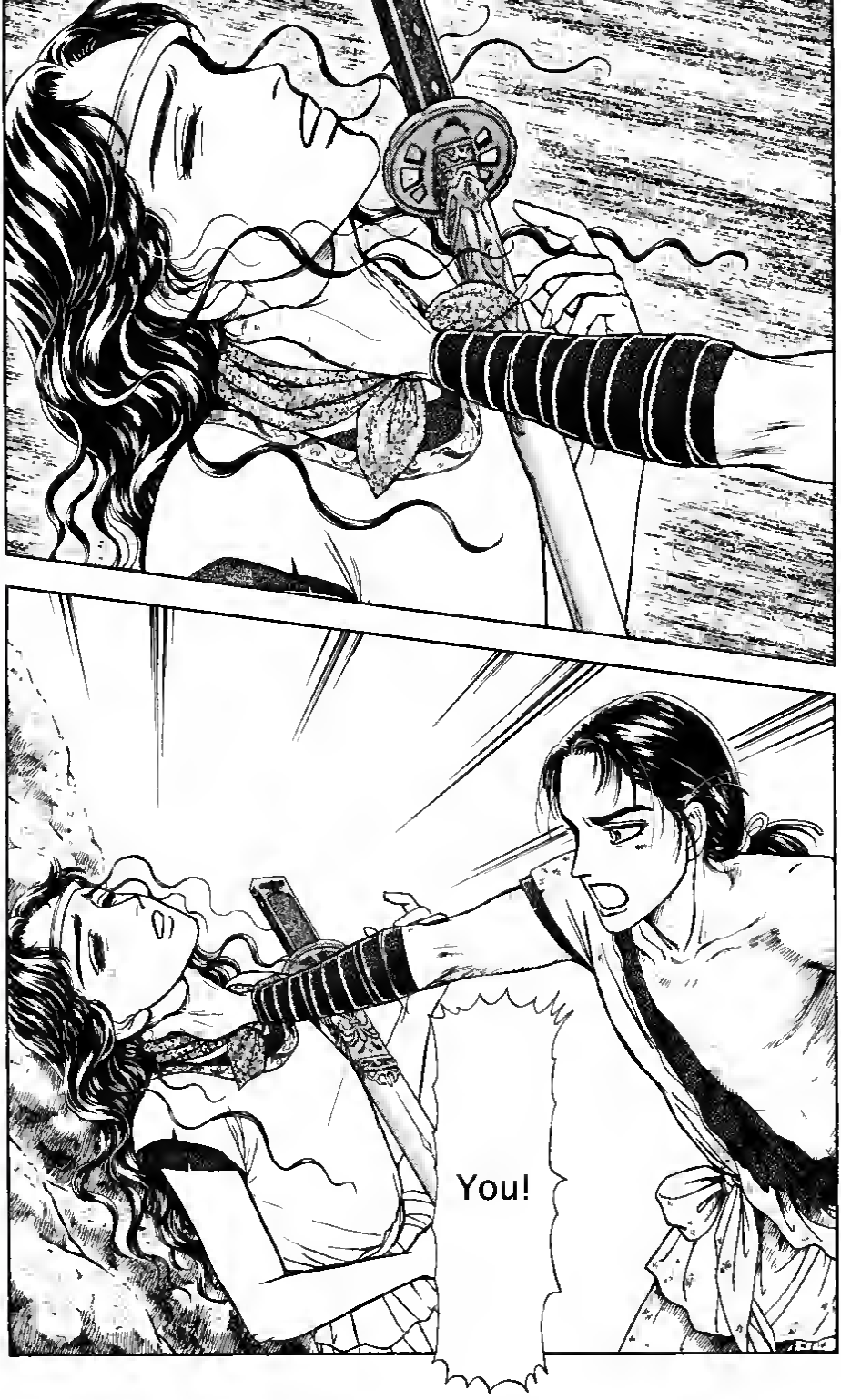
Takaya's calling me!
It's Takaya...!
He's alive!
He's calling me!
Say "Toko"!
Call me!
Call me again!


I'll kill them all...
Everyone who sides with the demon gods...
I'll kill...



...every last one of them!

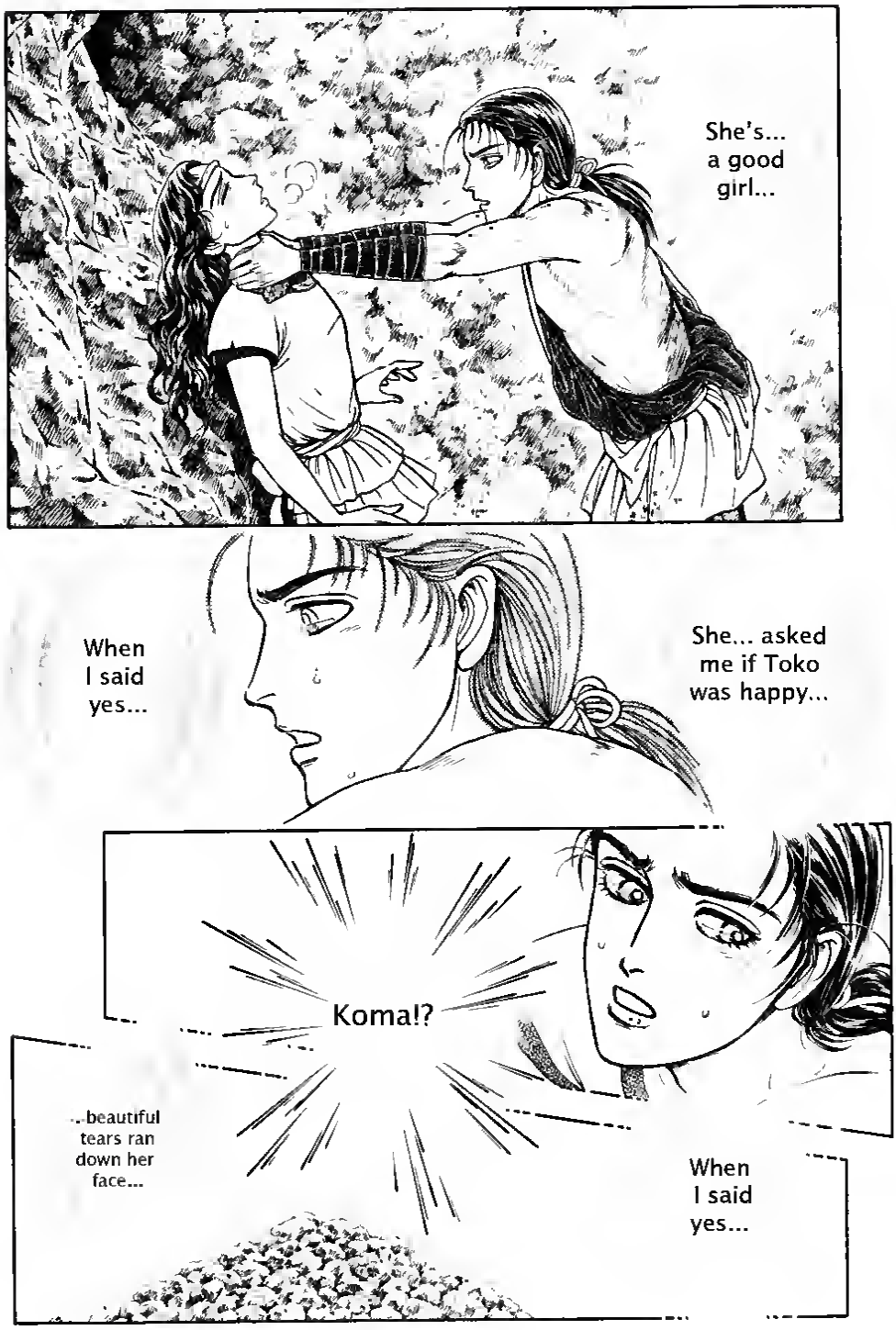
Ta...


You!

You killed ...
...my ...
GRIP
...my ...
...Toko ...

Toko

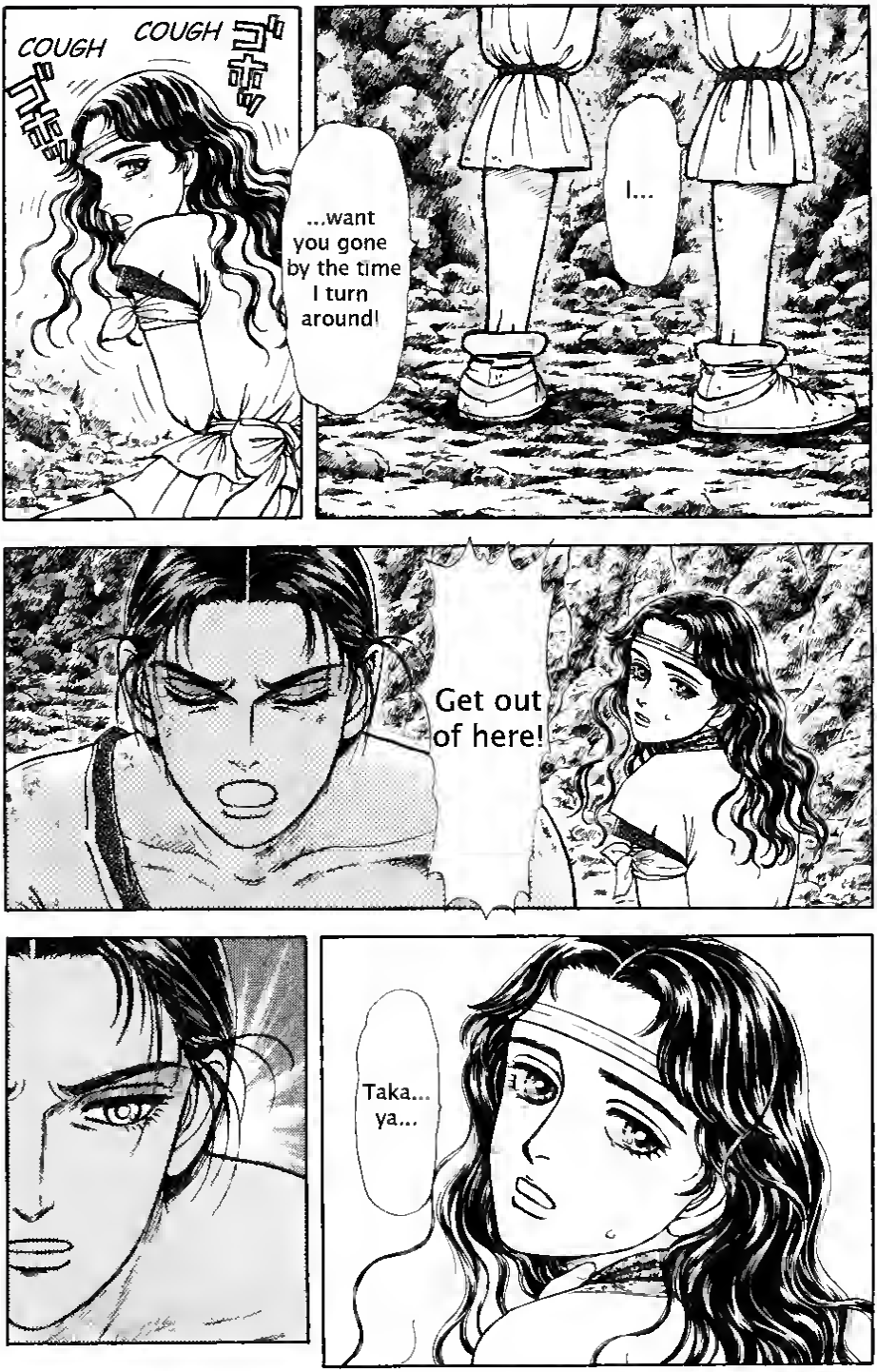
CLATTER
GRIP
My Toko!

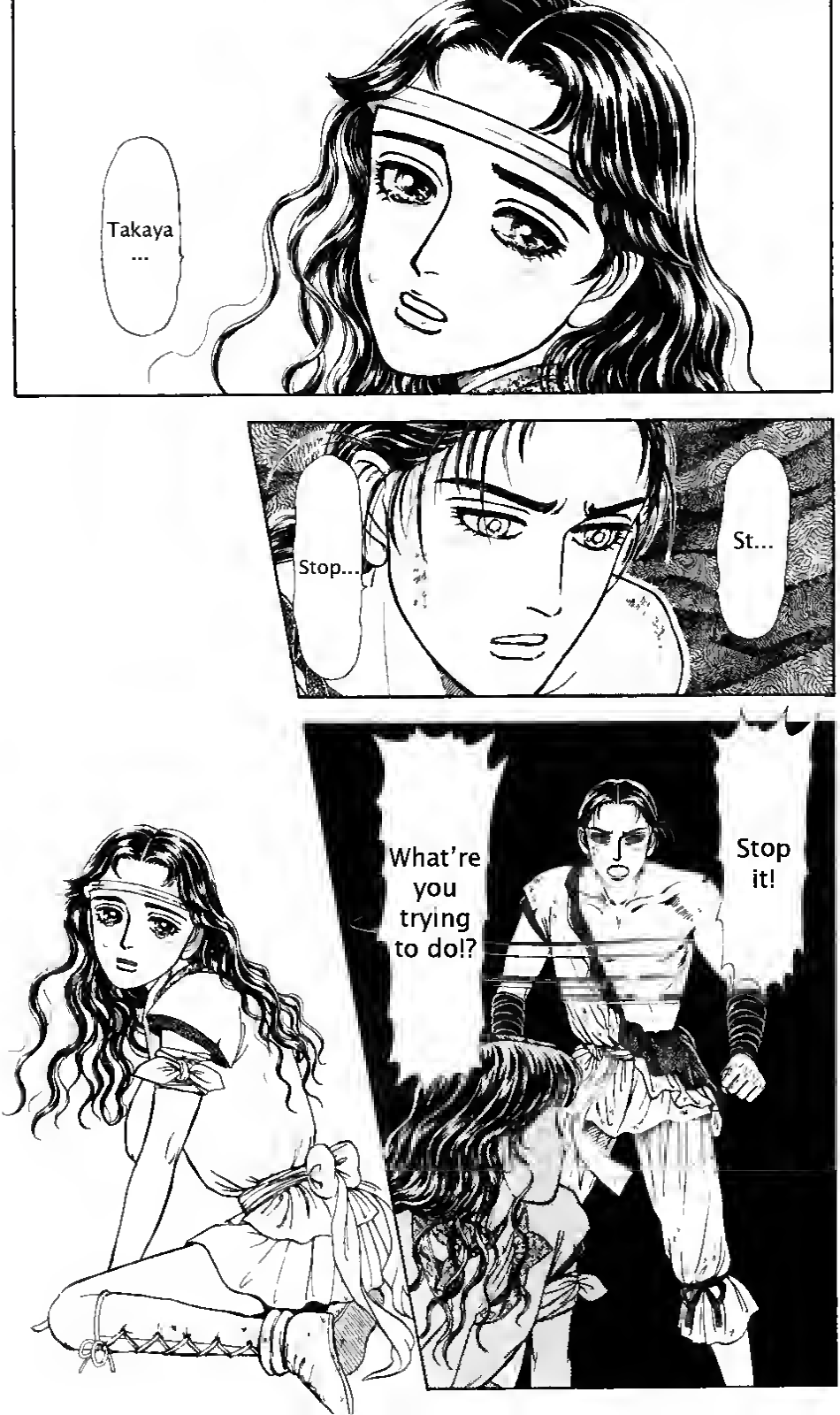

She's... a good girl...
When I said yes...
She... asked me if Toko was happy...
Koma!?
...beautiful tears ran down her face...
When I said yes...

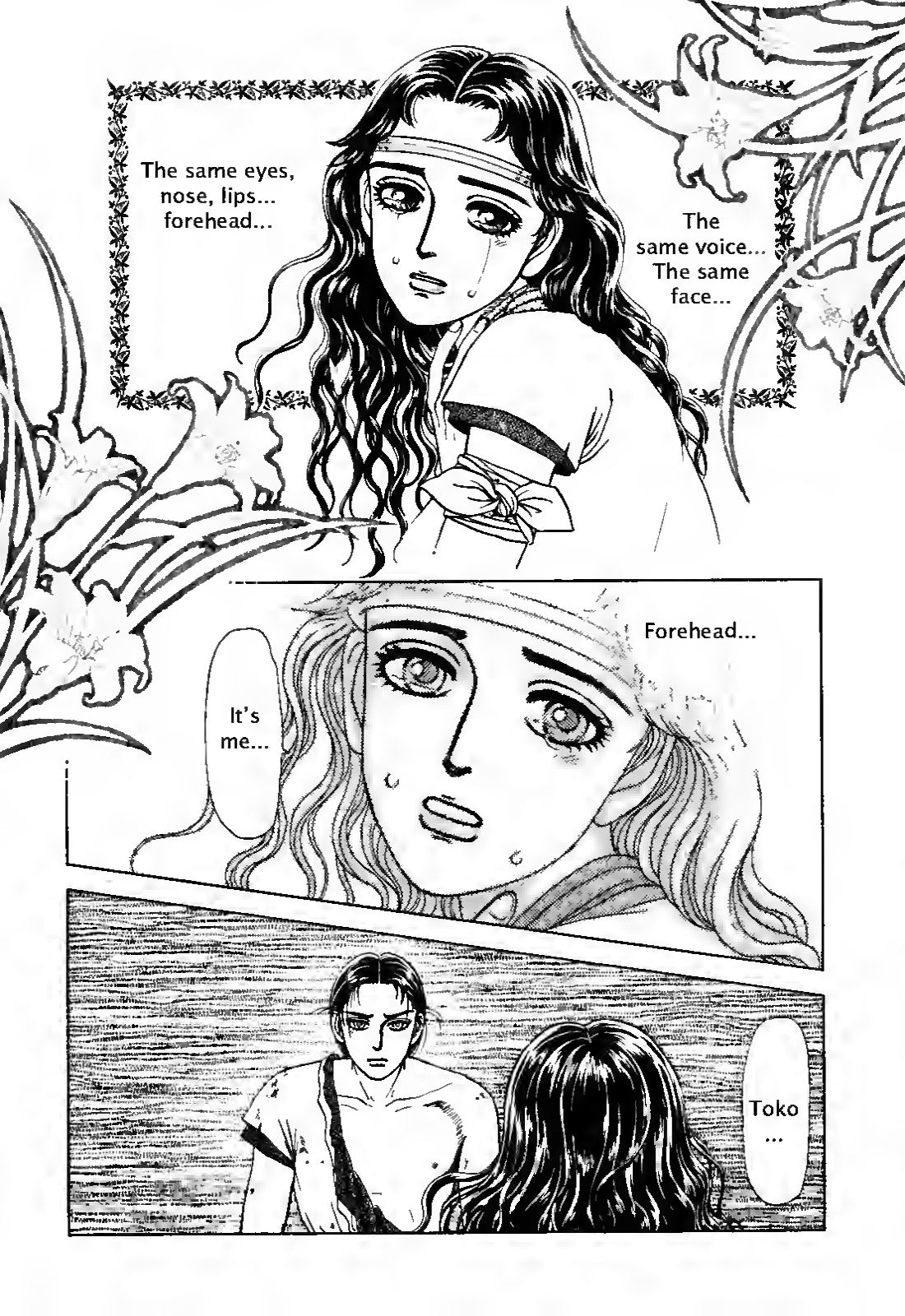
I'd never seen...
such beautiful tears...
...it was because of the demon headband...
She got hurt protecting me...
She killed Toko, but...
Please... save that girl...
Stop it, Koma!

Koma...!
You're the only one who can...
It's my... last wish...
Please...
Takaya...

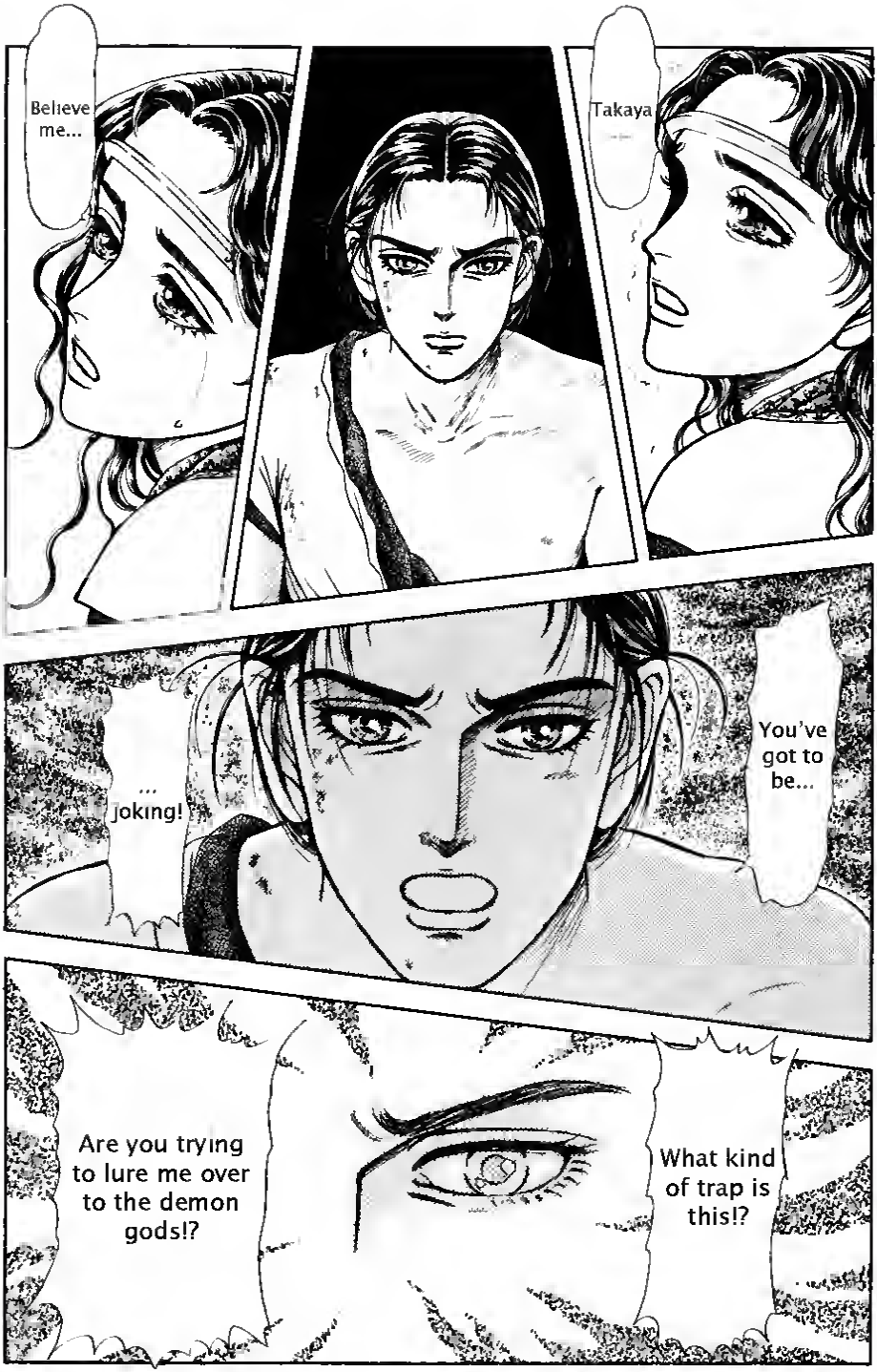
FLING
THUD
COUGH
GASP
COUGH
GASP


COUGH
COUGH
ゴホッ
ゴホッ
...want you gone by the time I turn around!
I...
Get out of here!
Taka... ya...

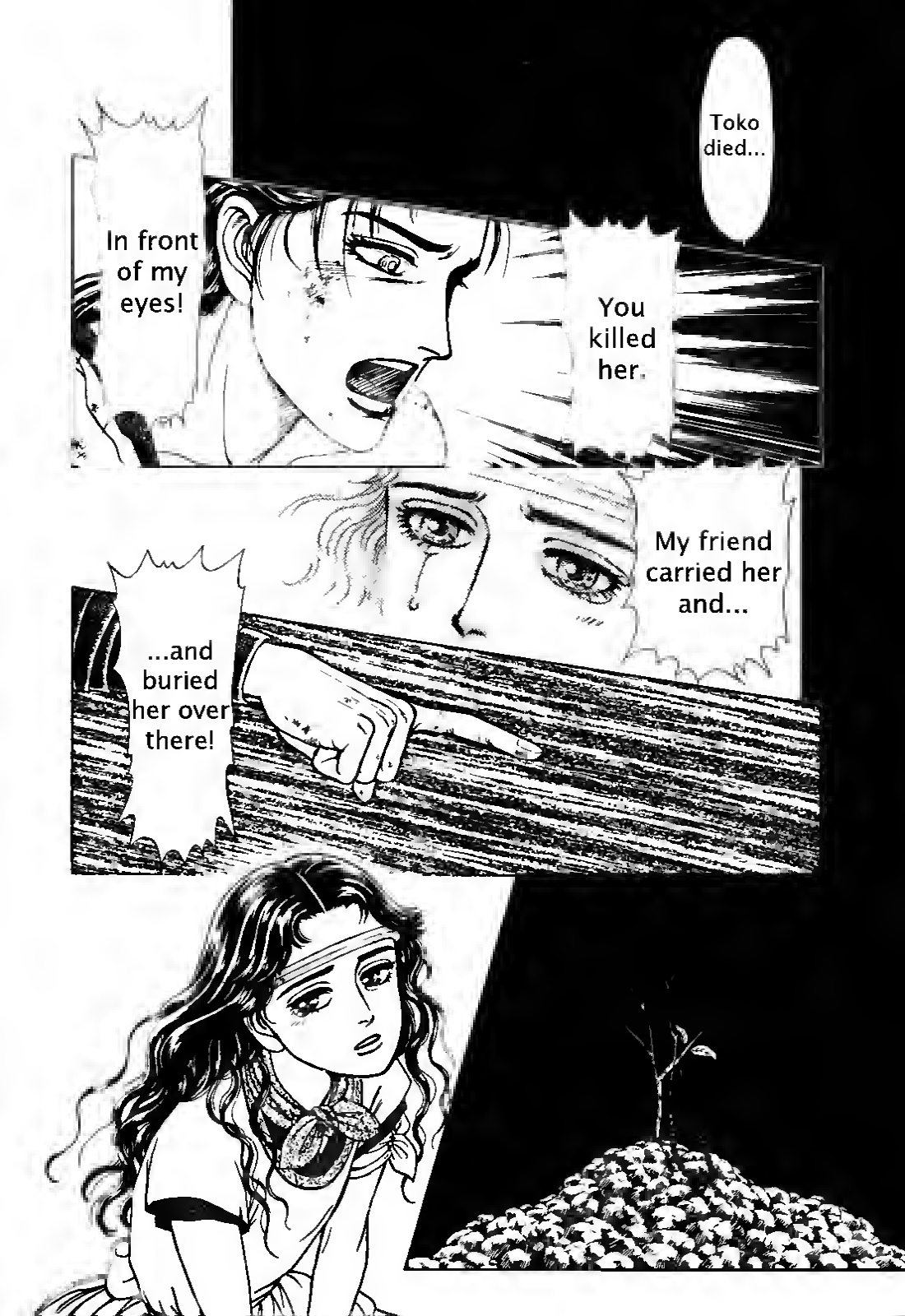

Takaya ...
Stop...
St...
What're you trying to do!?
Stop it!

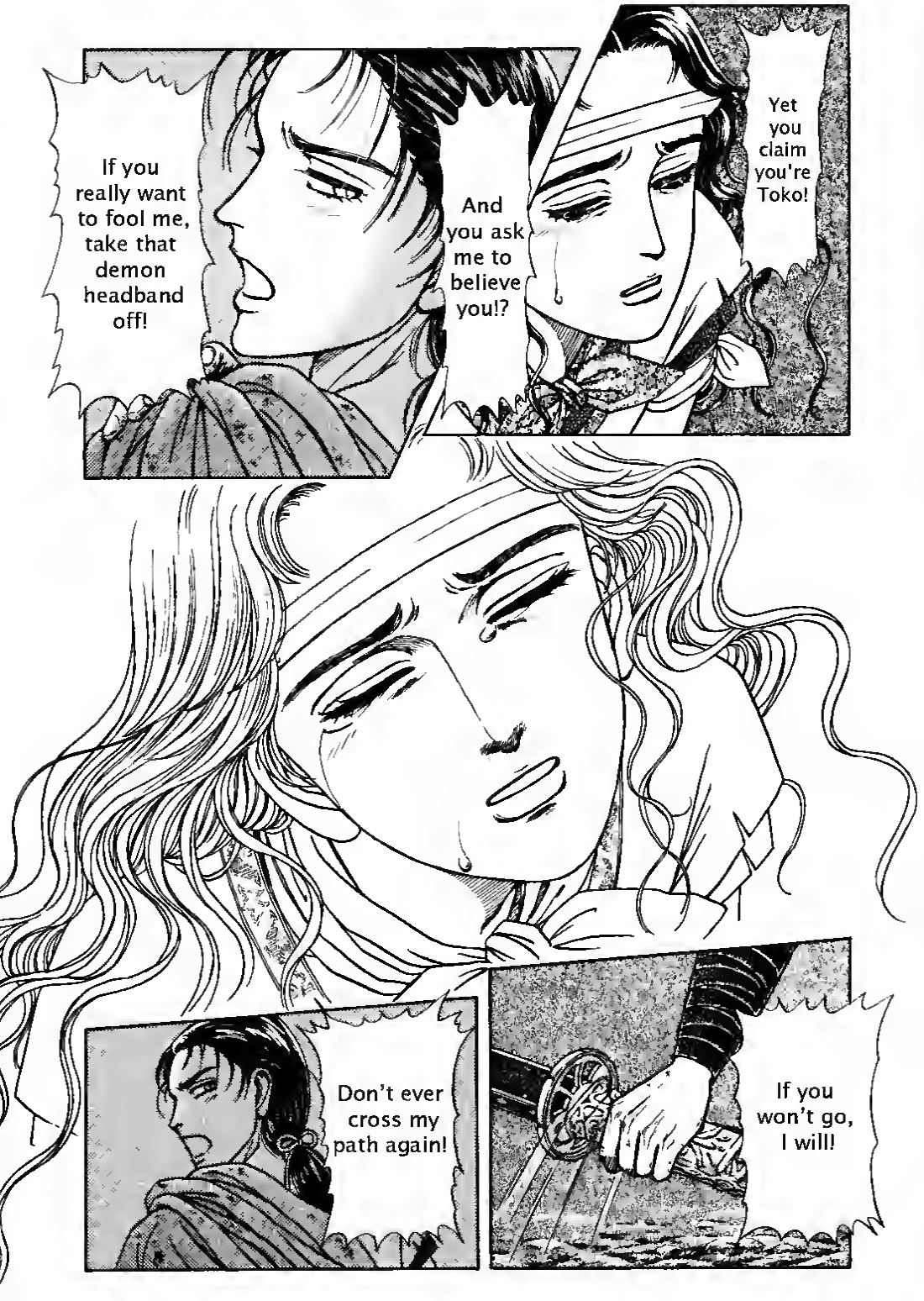

The same eyes, nose, lips... forehead...
The same voice... The same face...
Forehead...
It's me...
Toko ...

What ...
...do you want ...?
Why did you come here!?
Why are you looking at me with those eyes!?
Takaya!
There's no reason for you to call my name!
I'm Toko...
Toko ...!


Believe me...
Takaya
You've got to be...
... joking!
Are you trying to lure me over to the demon gods!?
What kind of trap is this!?

Takaya, listen!
Takaya!
...what happened or why it happened!
I don't know...
But I'm Toko!
Toko!


Toko died...
In front of my eyes!
You killed her.
My friend carried her and...
...and buried her over there!

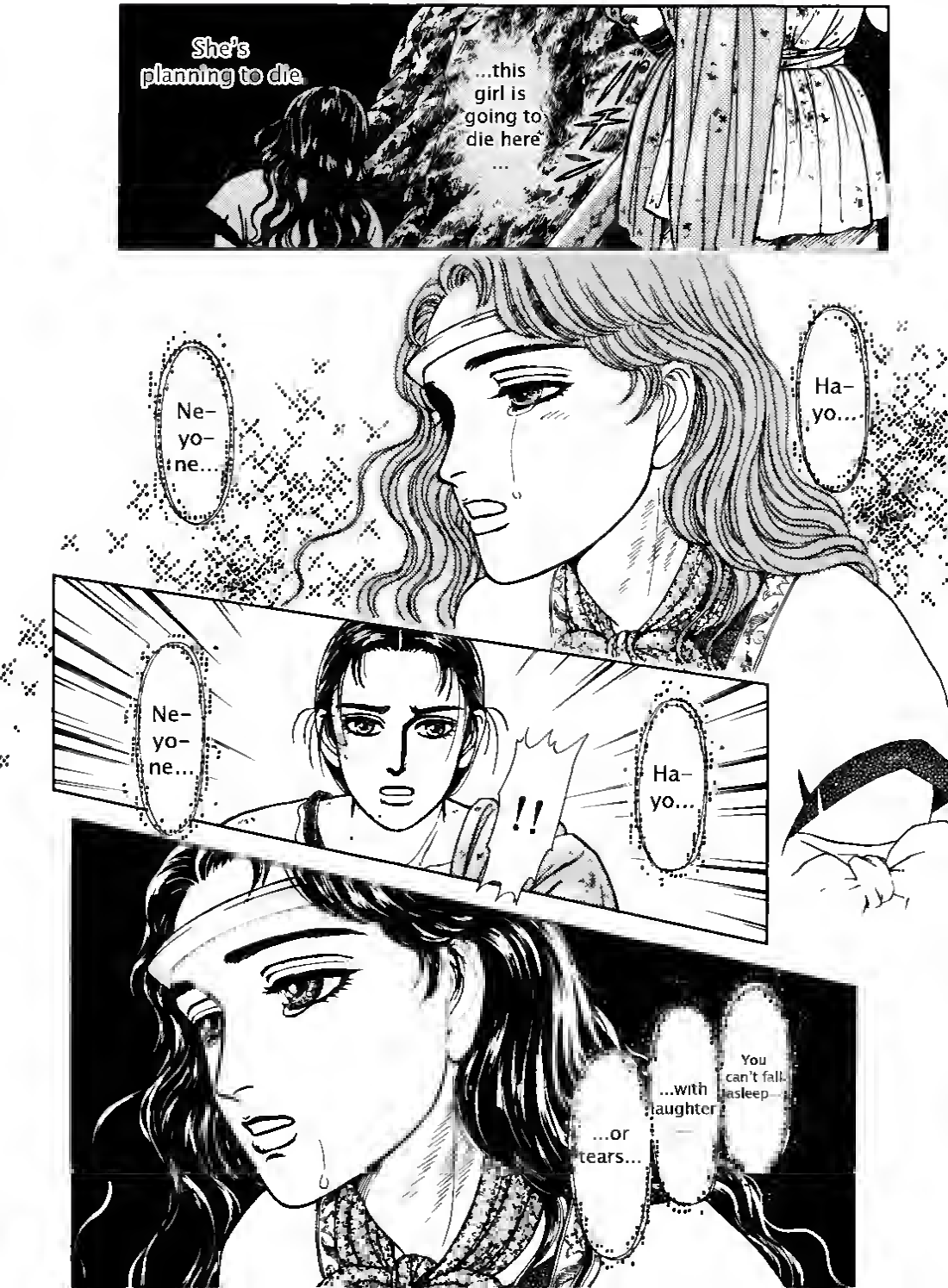

If you really want to fool me, take that demon headband off!
And you ask me to believe you!?
Yet you claim you're Toko!
Don't ever cross my path again!
If you won't go, I will!

Hurry and warn them...
Go help them...
Ichirota was captured by Kiyu and told him...
Their next targets are Aohiko, Misen, and the sacred mirror of Isana...

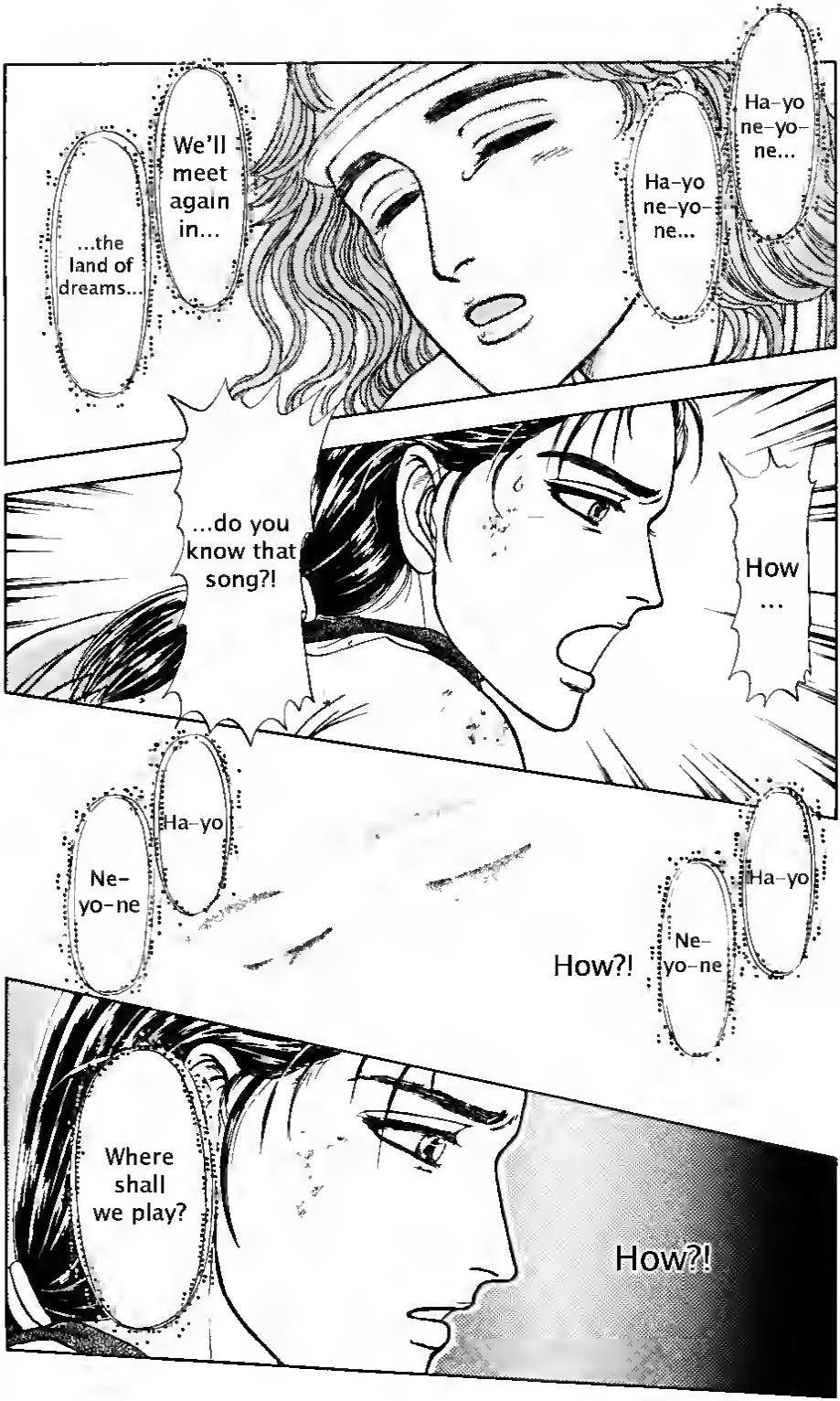
WHISH

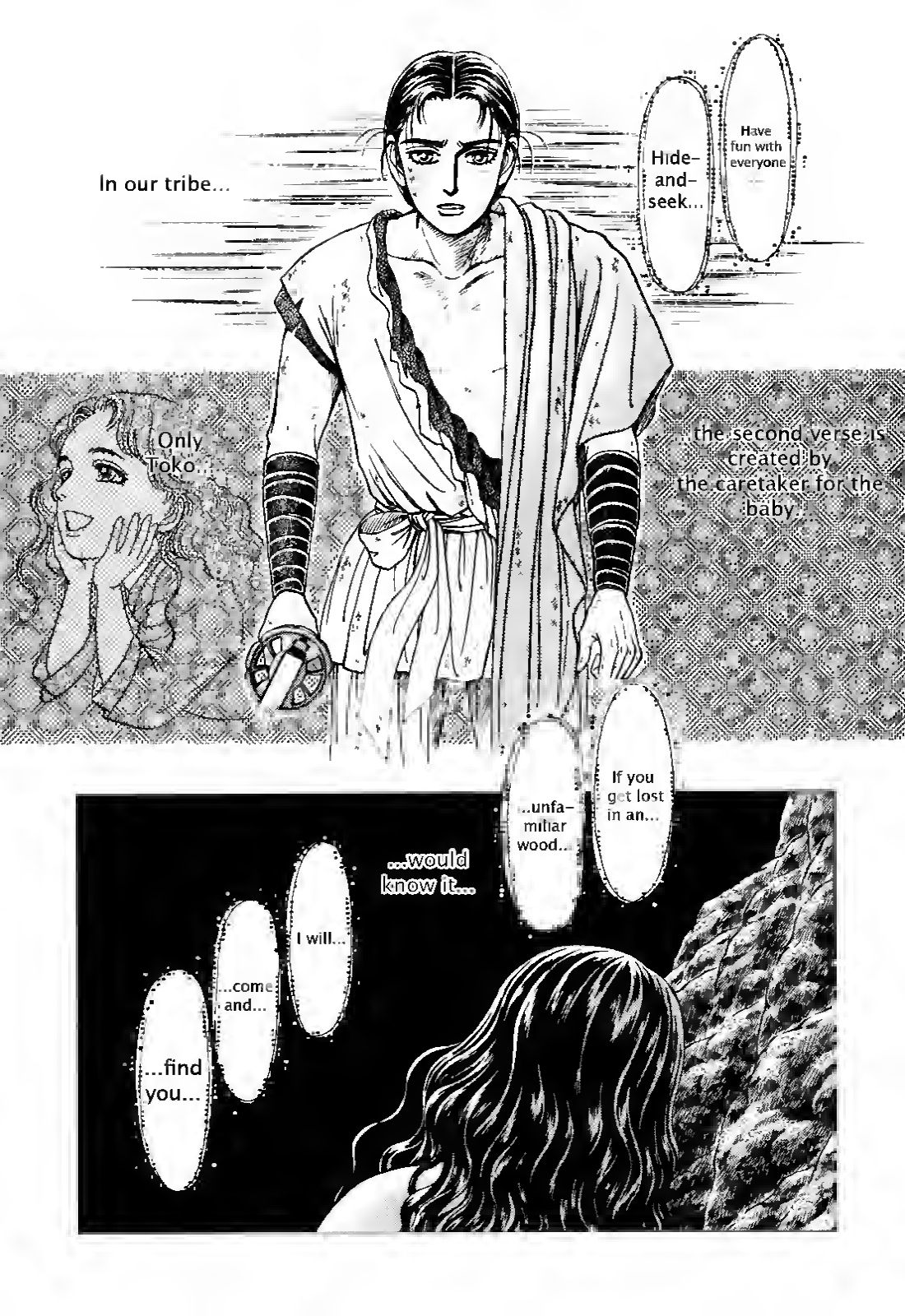
I don't care!
Stop!
I don't care any-more!
SNATCH

That's all...
...I wanted ...
I got to see you...
If I had reacted a moment later...
...
Even without the sword...
...to Isana...
Hurry... and go...
...she would have died...


She's planning to die
...this girl is going to die here ...
Ne-yo-ne...
Ha-yo...
Ne-yo-ne...
!!
Ha-yo...
...or tears...
...with laughter
You can't fall asleep...

What can you see when you...
... close your eyes?
The red flowers of a...
... faraway land.
The white waves of an...
...ocean never seen...
How...
...do you know...


Ha-yo ne-yo-ne...
Ha-yo ne-yo-ne...
We'll meet again in...
...the land of dreams...
How ...
...do you know that song?!
Ha-yo
Ne-yo-ne
Ha-yo
Ne-yo-ne
How?!
How?!
Where shall we play?

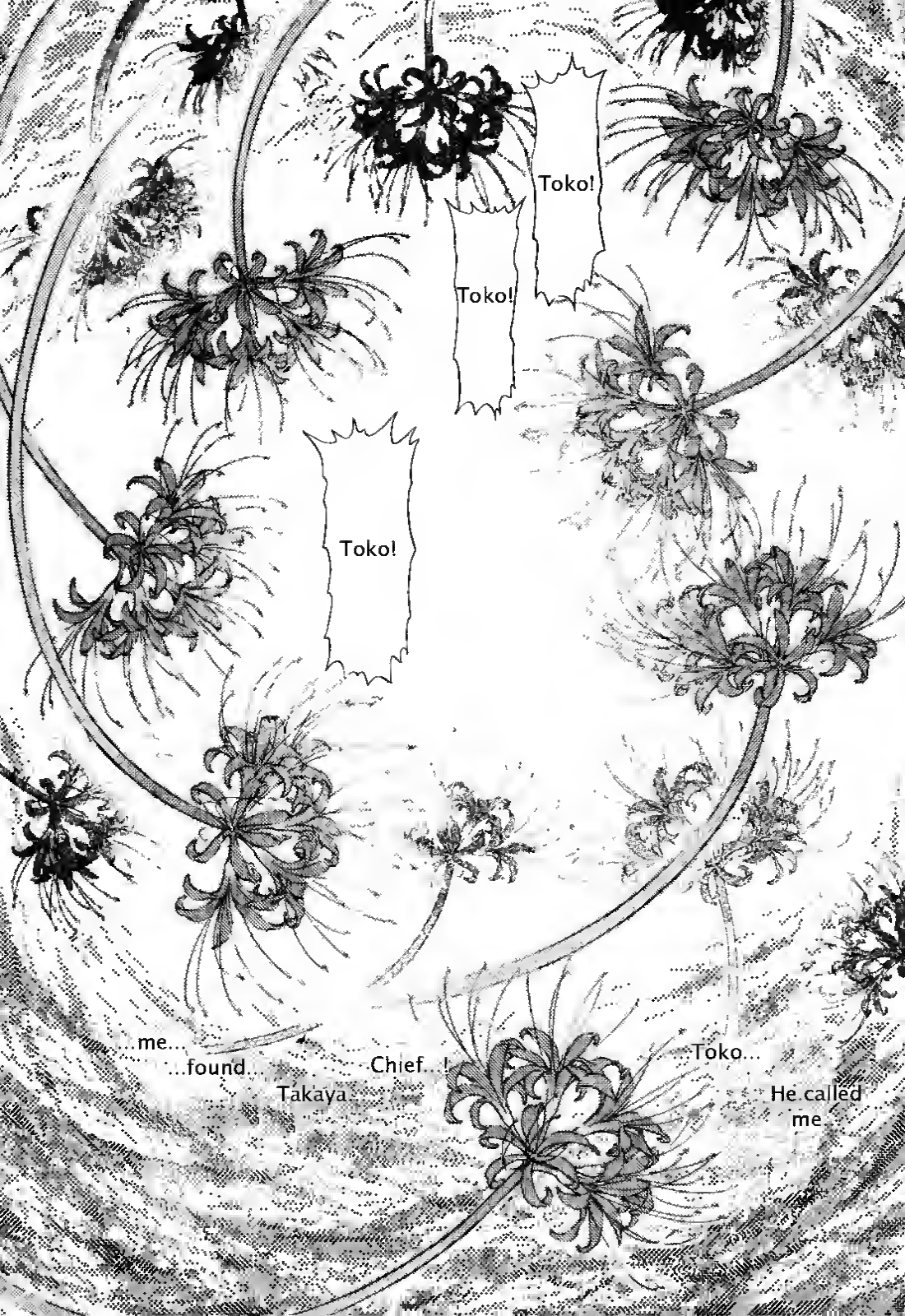

In our tribe...
Hide-and-seek...
Have fun with everyone
Only Toko...
...the second verse is created by the caretaker for the baby.
If you get lost in an...
...unfamiliar wood...
...would know it...
I will...
...come and...
...find you...

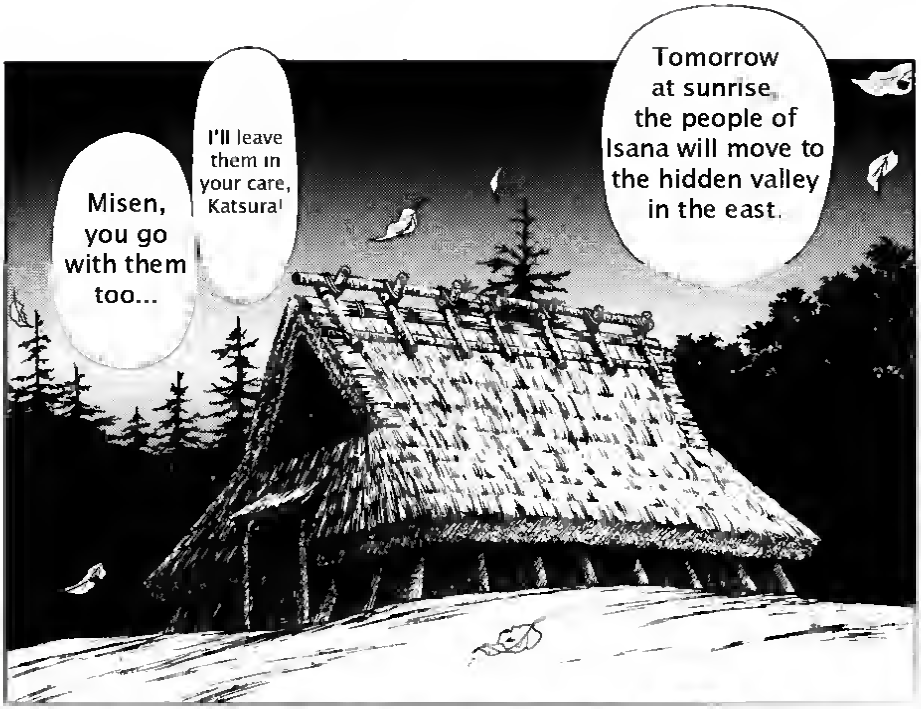
To...ko...!?
Come find me...

I'm here...
Inside Yoko's body...
Come find me!

カミーナ

Ahh
...
Toko!
Ah...
ah...
ahh...


Toko!
Toko!
Toko!
me...
...found...
Takaya...
Chief...!
Toko...
He called
me...

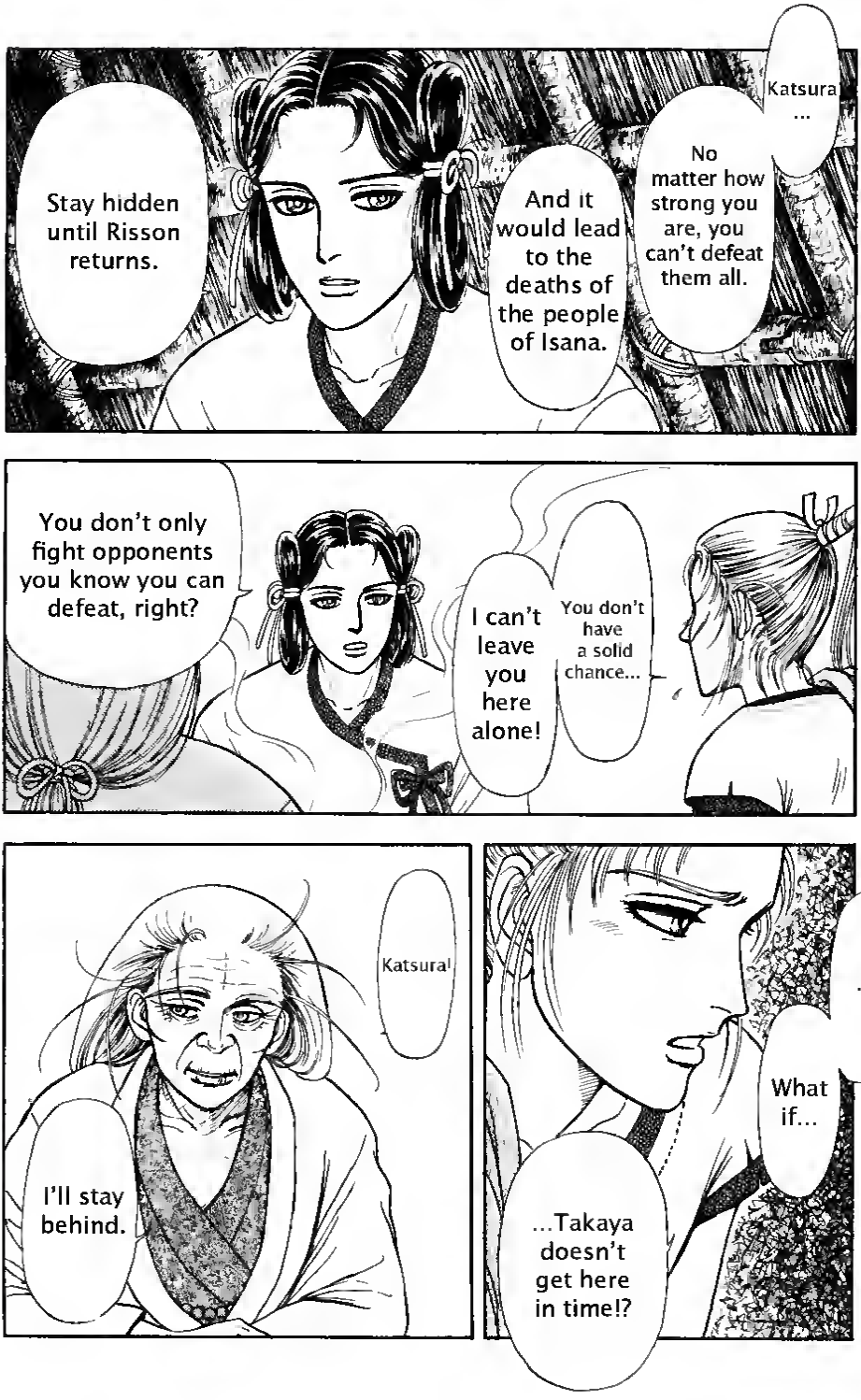

Tomorrow at sunrise, the people of Isana will move to the hidden valley in the east.
I'll leave them in your care, Katsura!
Misen, you go with them too...

Hold on, Aohiko!
You mean you're going to stay here and face Kiyu's army alone?

I can't let you stay...
A yin stone mantra destroys the lives of everyone indiscriminately.

But!
But what about Takaya!?
What if he doesn't find the village before the enemy does...?
Takaya will be fine.
He knows a mantra for protecting himself from the power of the yin stone...
Toko too?
Of course ...
Toko ...
Toko is also well-versed in yin stone mantras.
Will the yin stone mantra work on the demon gods?

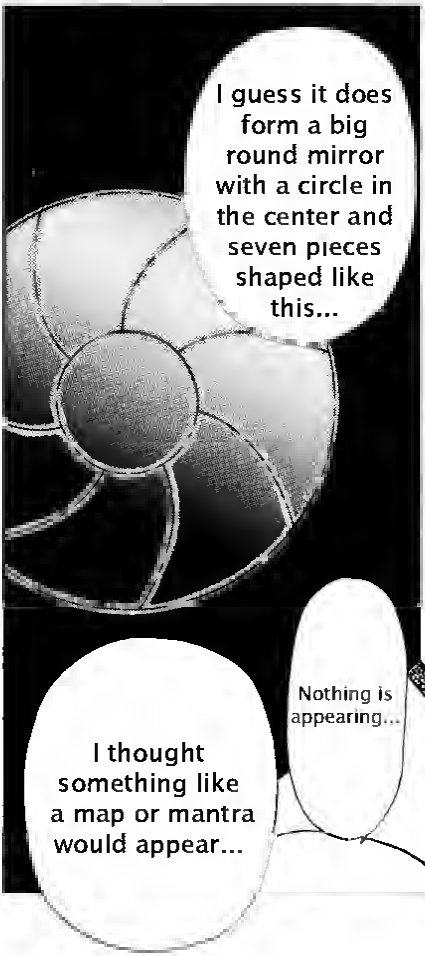
You don't know ...?
That's the one question ...
I don't know...
All we can do is hope for the best...
If we're found, I won't be able to use the yin stone mantra with everyone there.
We can hide away until it's over!
Come to the hidden valley with us.
Come with us!
I'll fight them!

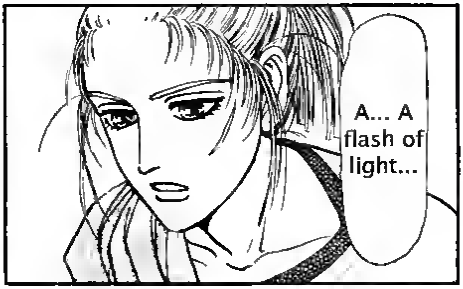

Katsura ...
No matter how strong you are, you can't defeat them all.
And it would lead to the deaths of the people of Isana.
Stay hidden until Risson returns.
You don't have a solid chance...
I can't leave you here alone!
You don't only fight opponents you know you can defeat, right?
Katsura!
I'll stay behind.
...
What if...
...Takaya doesn't get here in time!?

...of any use or not.
I'll stay here whether I'll be...
It's presumptuous of young people to treat old folks like old folks.
Misen!
Yes. It was delicious.
I've brought the sacred mirror of Isana. Have you finished eating?
Misen
The Oracle will bring the yin stone soon.

Let's fit them togeth-er...
Put it down there.
It really does have the same shape.
SCREEEEE
STARTLE

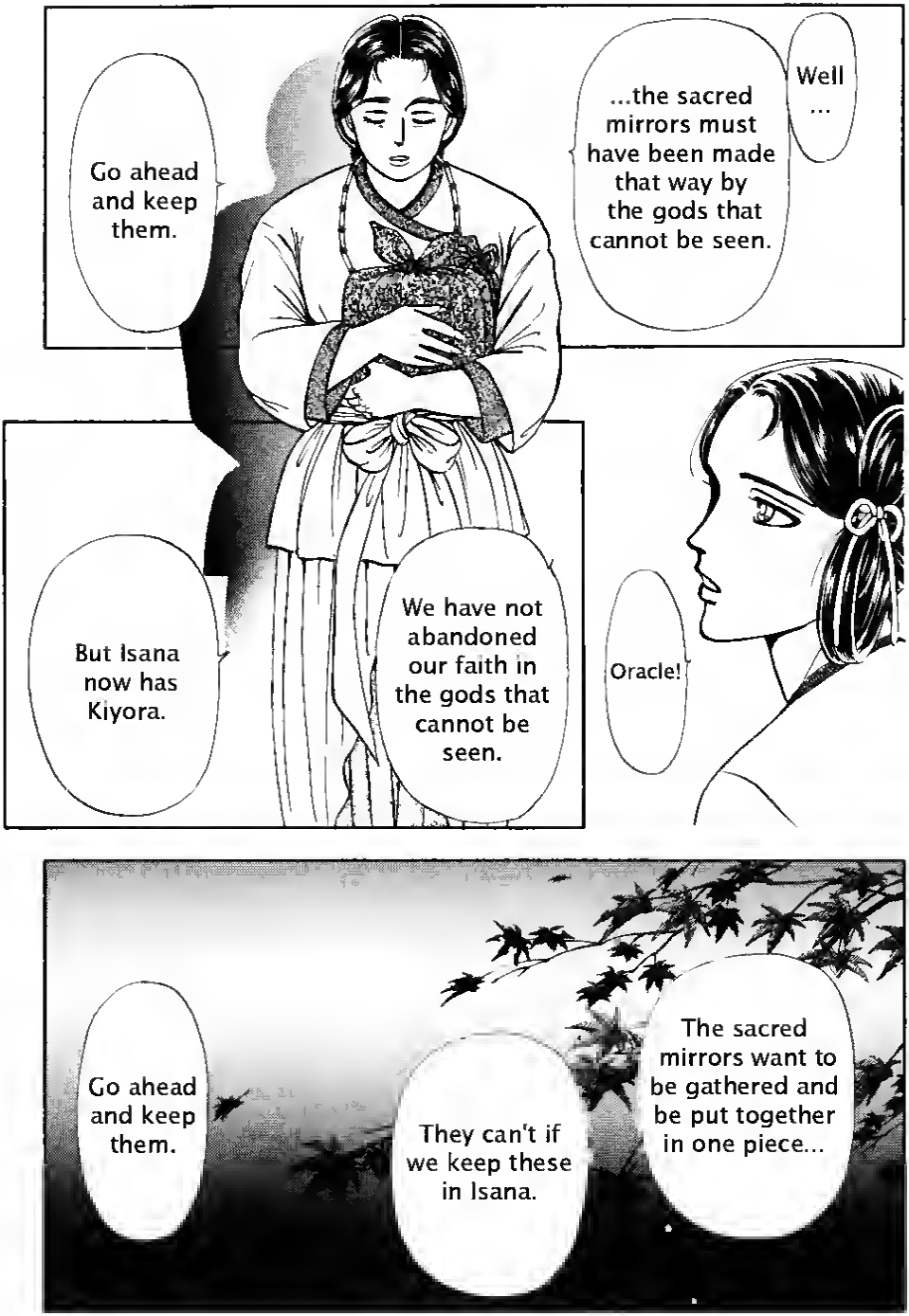
Ohh!


I guess it does form a big round mirror with a circle in the center and seven pieces shaped like this...
I thought something like a map or mantra would appear...
Nothing is appearing...


A... A flash of light...

They're stuck together.

I guess you have to put all the pieces together...
Somethin g's still missing...
So did I.
Come in!
We just put the sacred mirrors together.
Misen... I've brought the yin stone.
...
Look at this...
They're stuck together... We can't get them apart...


Go ahead and keep them.
...the sacred mirrors must have been made that way by the gods that cannot be seen.
Well ...
But Isana now has Kiyora.
We have not abandoned our faith in the gods that cannot be seen.
Oracle!
Go ahead and keep them.
They can't if we keep these in Isana.
The sacred mirrors want to be gathered and be put together in one piece...

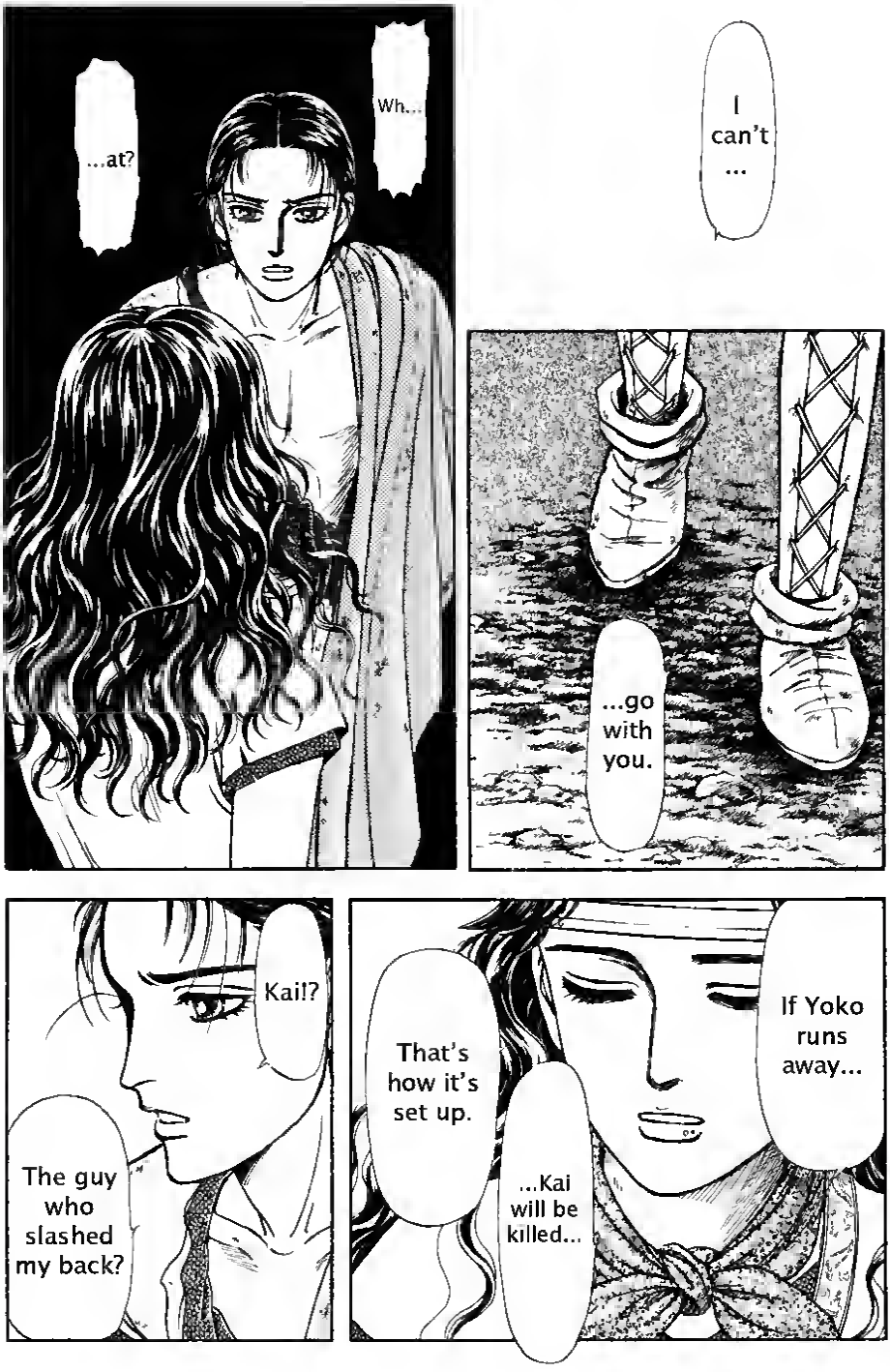
Don't be difficult.
What do you mean 'something'?
If something happens to me, give them to Risson.
I'll leave the sacred mirrors with you.
Katsura!
FWIP
I think it would be best for Katsura to step outside for a while...
Well, let me show you the yin stone of Isana.
I don't plan on having any kids!
The yin stone is said to affect women's ability to bear children...

It's getting chilly.
Take my cloak.
Okay, okay!
There's no point in me seeing it anyway!
Katsura!
Whose kids would I have!?
Hmph! I'm not going to have any kids!
I'm such a hopeless idiot...
BLUSH

Yoko always wanted to die...
...but she kept on living, for Toko.
I was... ready to die then...
...with her... With Yoko...

But...
When you called me...
...I looked at you...
...
...and let Yoko die alone...
You two... must have become one.
Your soul merged with Yoko's body...
...and Yoko's soul merged with your soul.

I'll give you whatever you want.
You...
...say exactly what I want to hear.
Don't worry about anything!
I'll help you remember Toko's memories.
Takaya!
!!
Well, let's hurry to Isana!


Wh...
...at?
I can't ...
...go with you.
Kai!?
The guy who slashed my back?
That's how it's set up.
If Yoko runs away...
...Kai will be killed...

Koma was cut in the same way I was.
He's probably the one who killed Koma!
He and Yoko have always been together.
He's like her younger brother...
Come with me!
No!
I'll get Kai out and follow you!
There's no way I'm sending you back to Kiyu!
I can't abandon him!

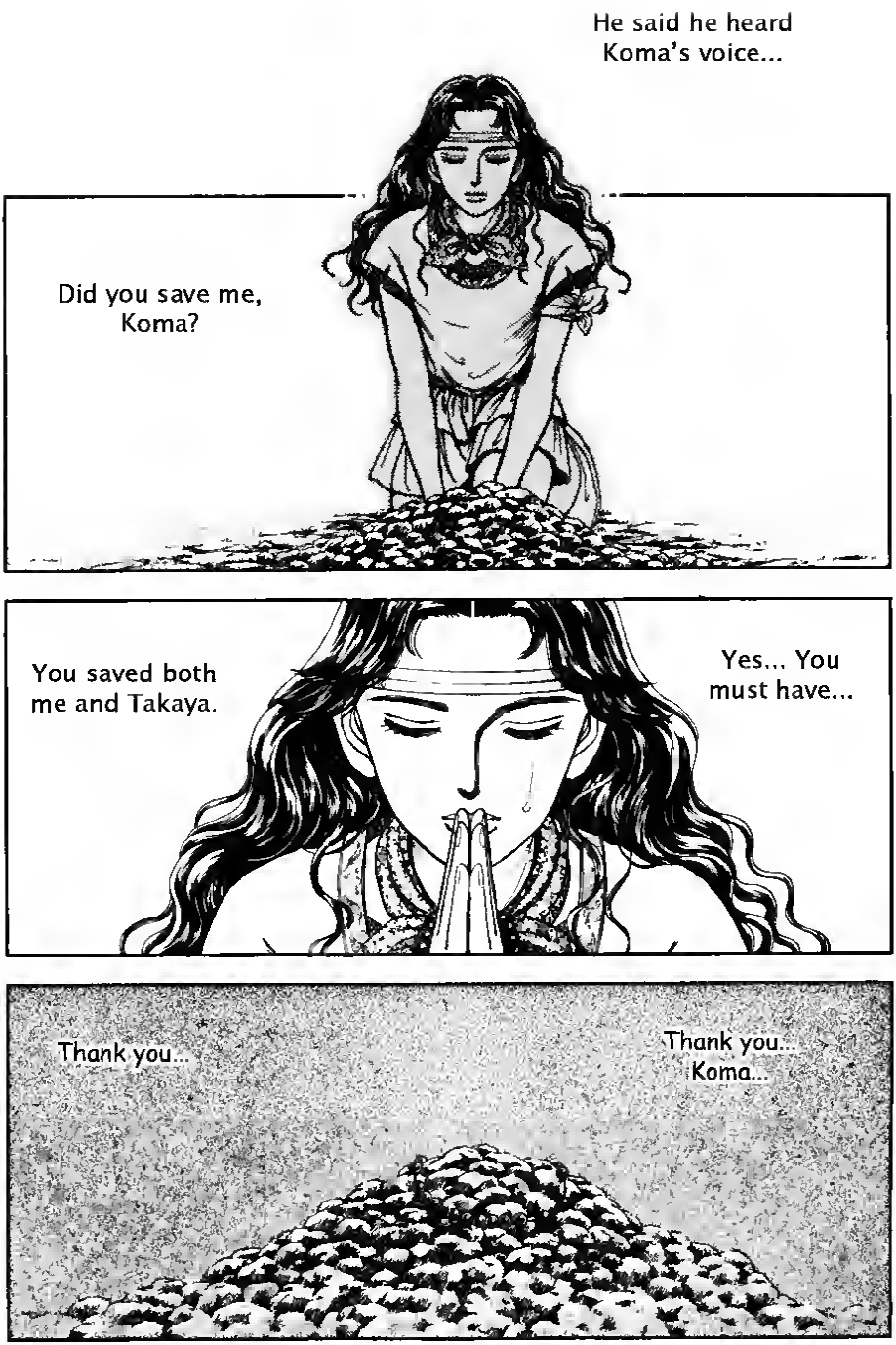
No!
No!
No!
I'll be fine! I can pull it off.
...
Takayaa ...
I'll catch up with you!
You're going to kill me with worry one of these days.
That's my Toko...
Stubborn as always ...
(The chicks finally make a reap-pearance.)

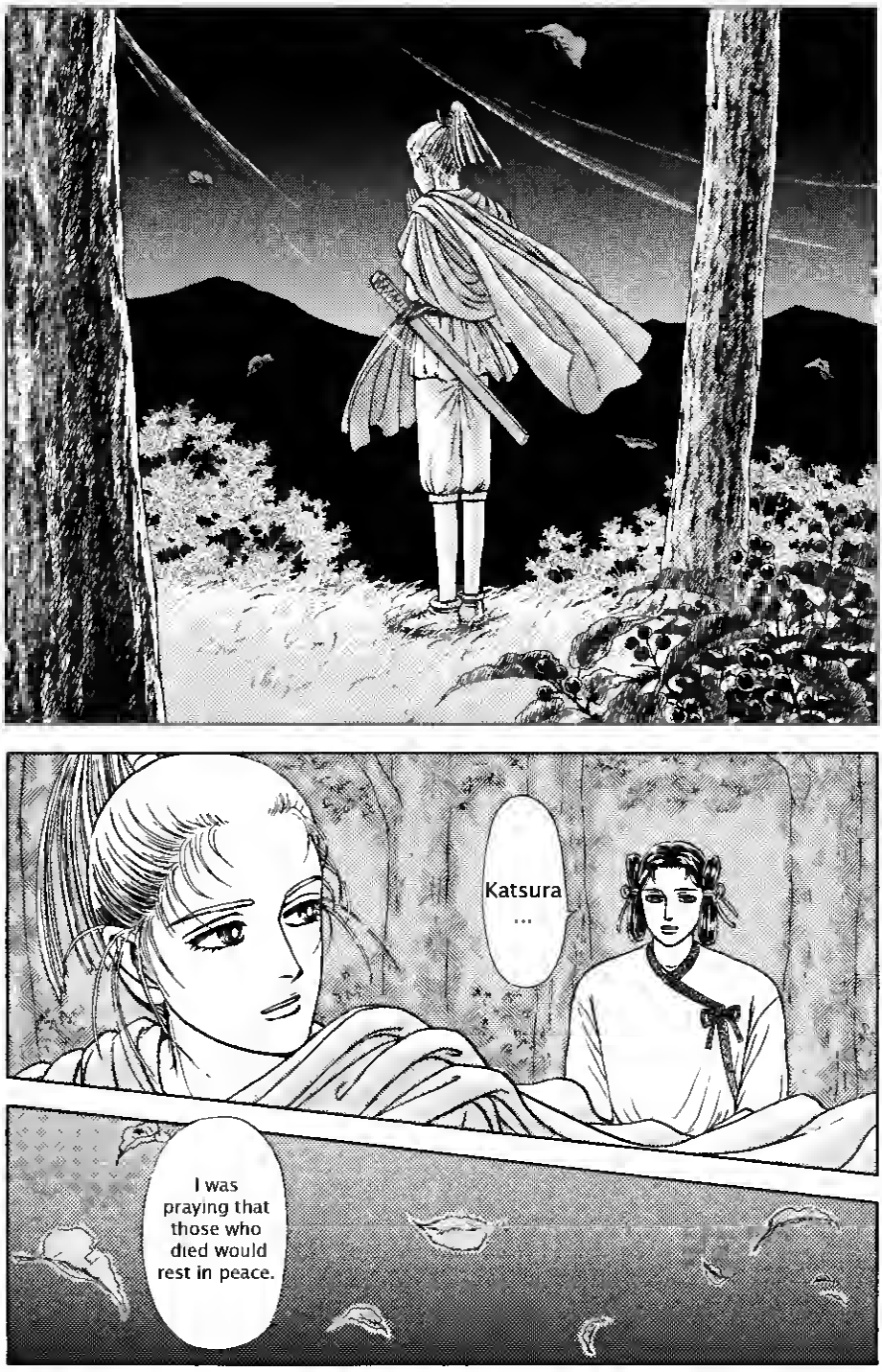
And her body is much more hardened.
Yoko's legs are faster than Toko's.
Don't worry!
Toko has a stronger spirit than Yoko!
But...
I'm...
...shockingly strong!
Fine!
I'll go on ahead!
Be careful! Skilled warriors are looking for you.

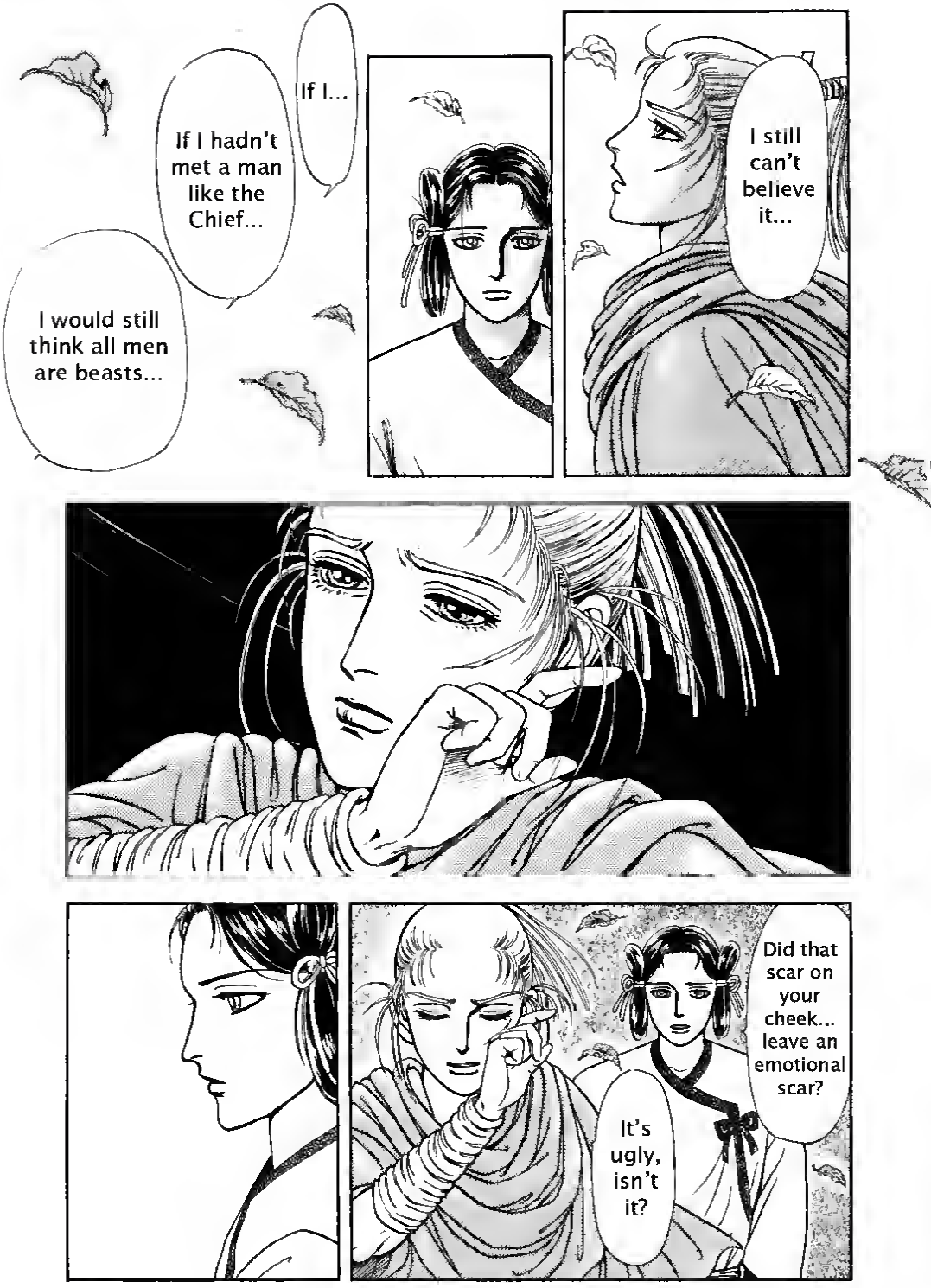
That face!

She really is Toko!

...isn't the body I raised...
I couldn't touch... that headband...


He said he heard Koma's voice...
Did you save me, Koma?
You saved both me and Takaya.
Yes... You must have...
Thank you...
Thank you... Koma...

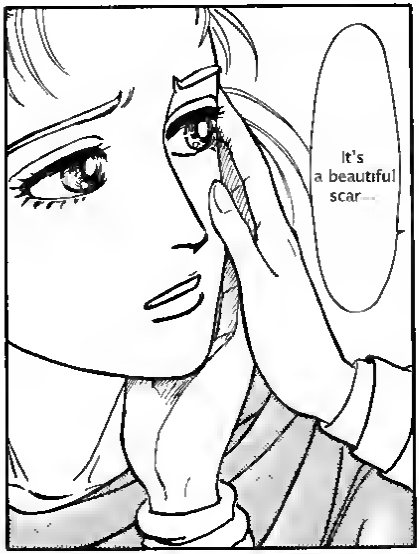

Katsura
...
I was praying that those who died would rest in peace.


If I...
If I hadn't met a man like the Chief...
I would still think all men are beasts...
I still can't believe it...
Did that scar on your cheek... leave an emotional scar?
It's ugly, isn't it?

My tribe was attacked by demon-god warriors...
My parents and brothers were killed in front of my eyes...
This man...
...said he would spare my life...
...if I became his. I was barely ten at the time...
When I told him to kill me...
...he left this scar instead...
...on my cheek...

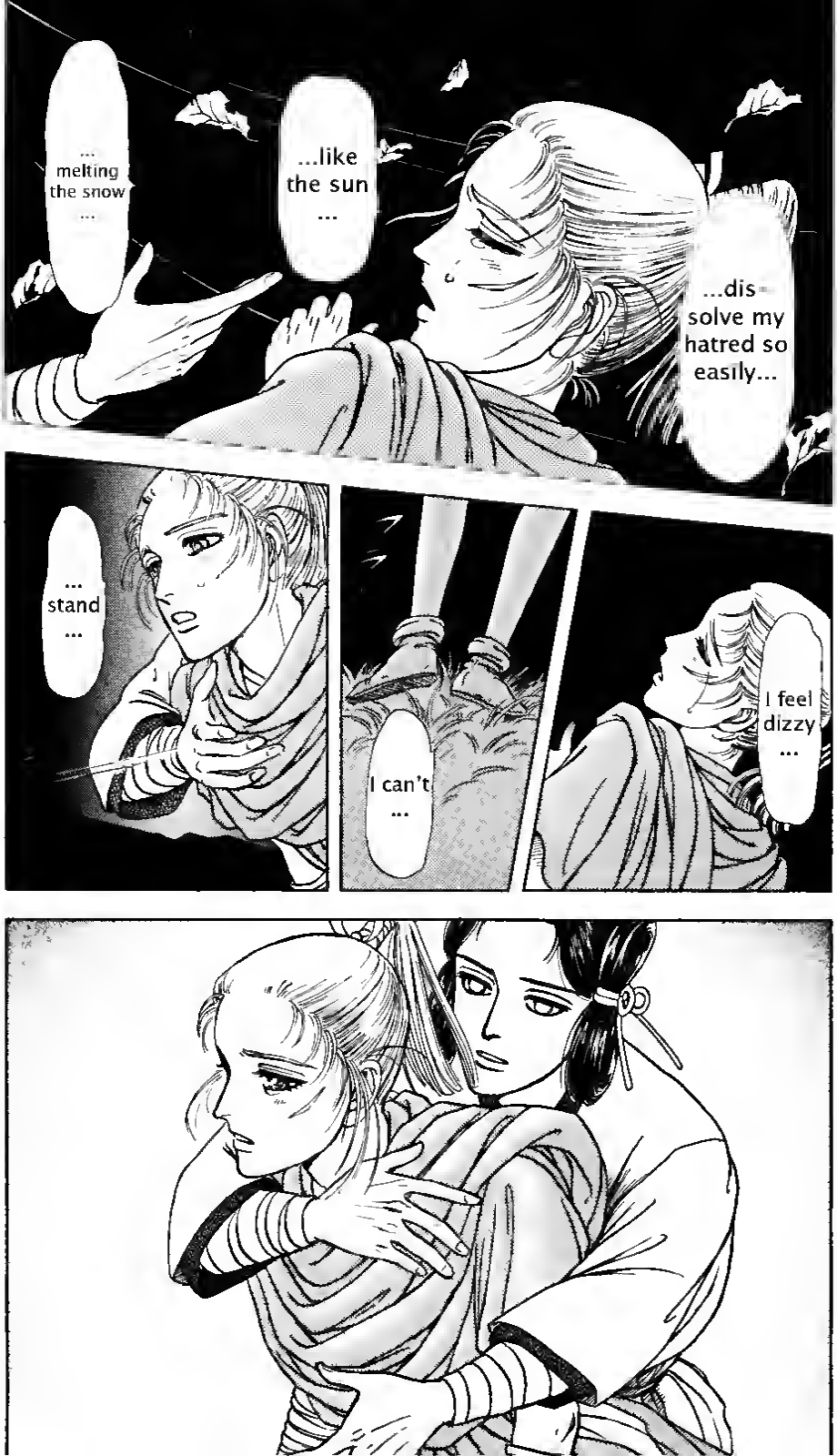
A scar that would never fade as long as I lived...
He laughed ...
...and said, "Now you'll never be able to forget me"...
As if I'd ever forget!
I fight because of my hatred for that man!
This ugly scar drives me to fight!

...that you maintained your pride.
It's proof...
I don't think it's ugly.

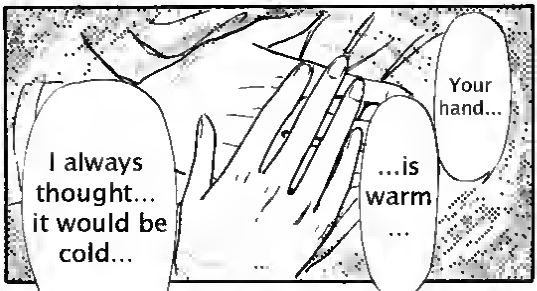

It's a beautiful scar...

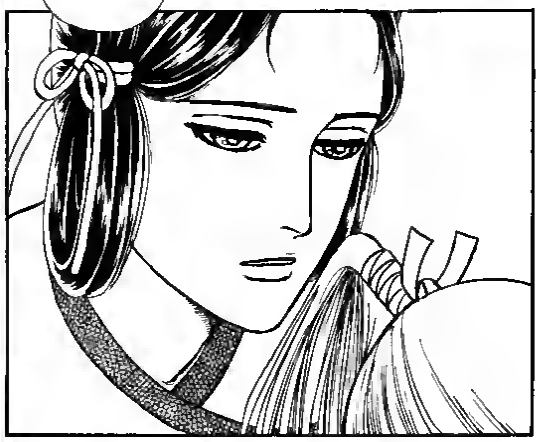
Isn't it?
It's a badge of honor.

Forget that man.
Forget him...
That is how you can defeat him.
Both you and this scar can become even more beautiful.
Stop...
How can you...


...
melting
the snow
...
...like
the sun
...
...dis-
solve my
hatred so
easily...
...
stand
...
I can't
...
I feel
dizzy
...

Now...
I know...
Why
I fell for this man...
Why it had
to be Aohiko...


Your
hand...
...is
warm
...


I always
thought...
it would be
cold...

Do you
remember
that day...
That rainy day...
when you found
my cloak in the
woods?

Yes...
Rainy day...!?
The night before that...
The day... you said you would join Risson?
...powerfully hypnotized me...
...Risson called me into the woods and...
...and to believe it was my will to do so...
...to go with him...

Aohi-ko!?
The hypnosis faded as I got farther away from him...
!!
...Toko and Takaya outgrew their need for me...
...for constantly imposing on you long after...
I'm sorry...
No!
...and Ichirota...
...to you...
I can't apologize enough...

I just wanted to be with you...
You've got it wrong!
...just to be able to look at you!
I will protect Isana...
Katsura ...
So please stay here, lay down your arms... and live a happy life.

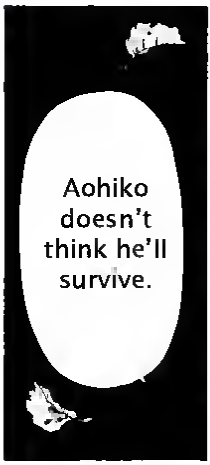
A...
Are you...
... leaving me!?
You're leaving me!?

...

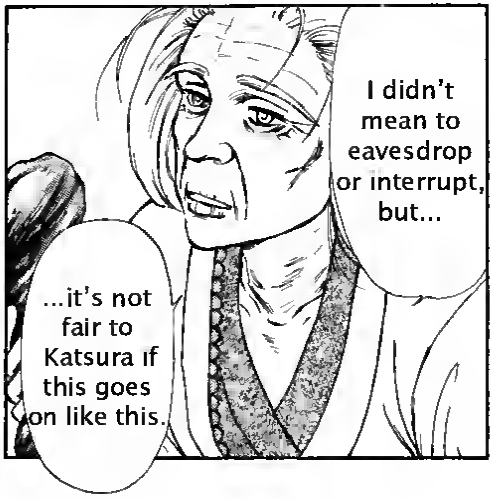
...supp-
osed to
make me
happy!?
How is
leaving
me here
alone...
Don't
think of
me as
a person!
Or a
woman!
I'm
a sword
to protect
you!
Can't we
continue
on as
before?
It's good
enough for
me!
If I
think of
you as
a sword...
That's not
a problem
is it!?
Just
a sword!

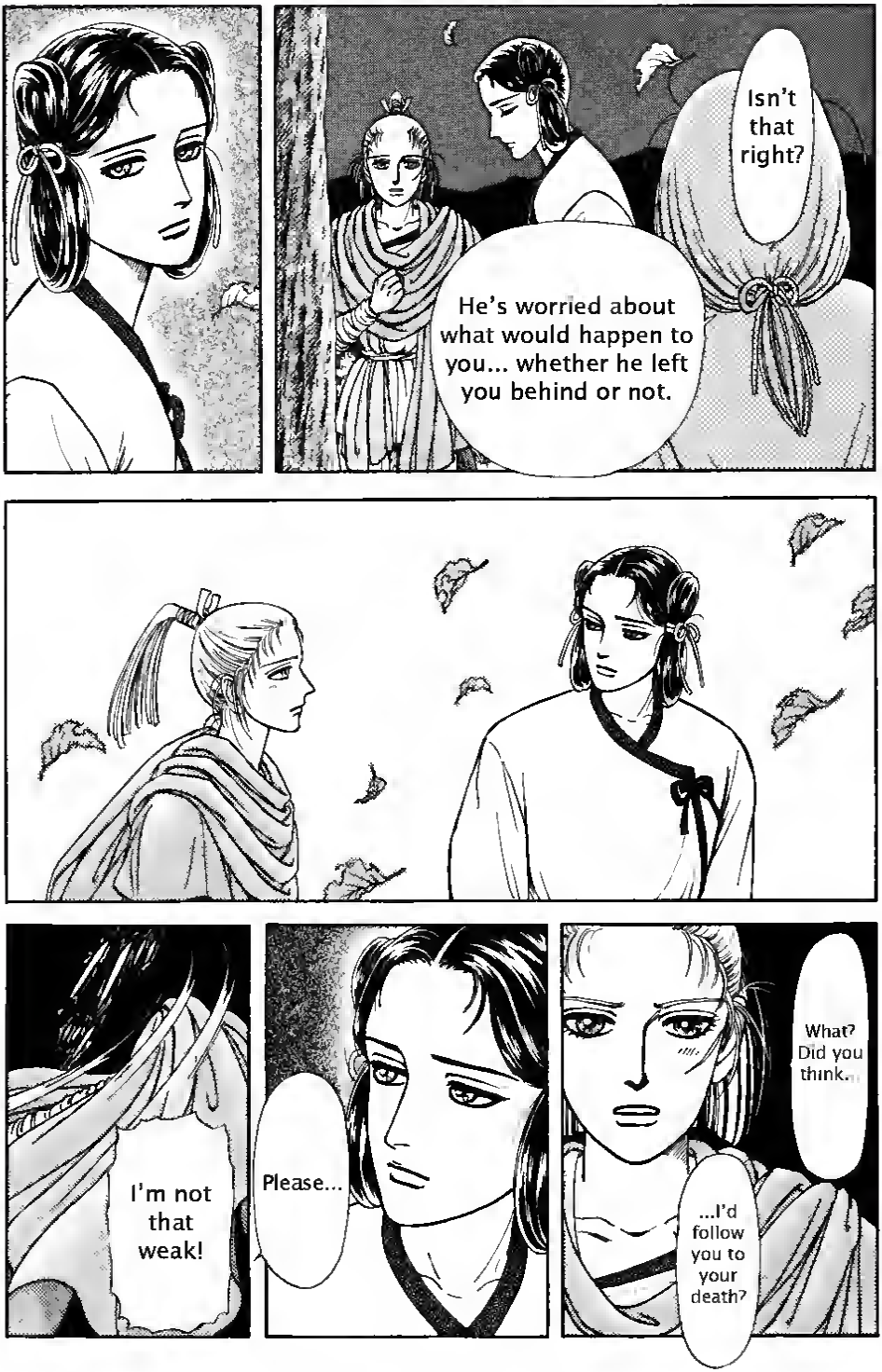
...I can't hope for your happiness...

Misen ...
Tell her...
... Aohiko ...

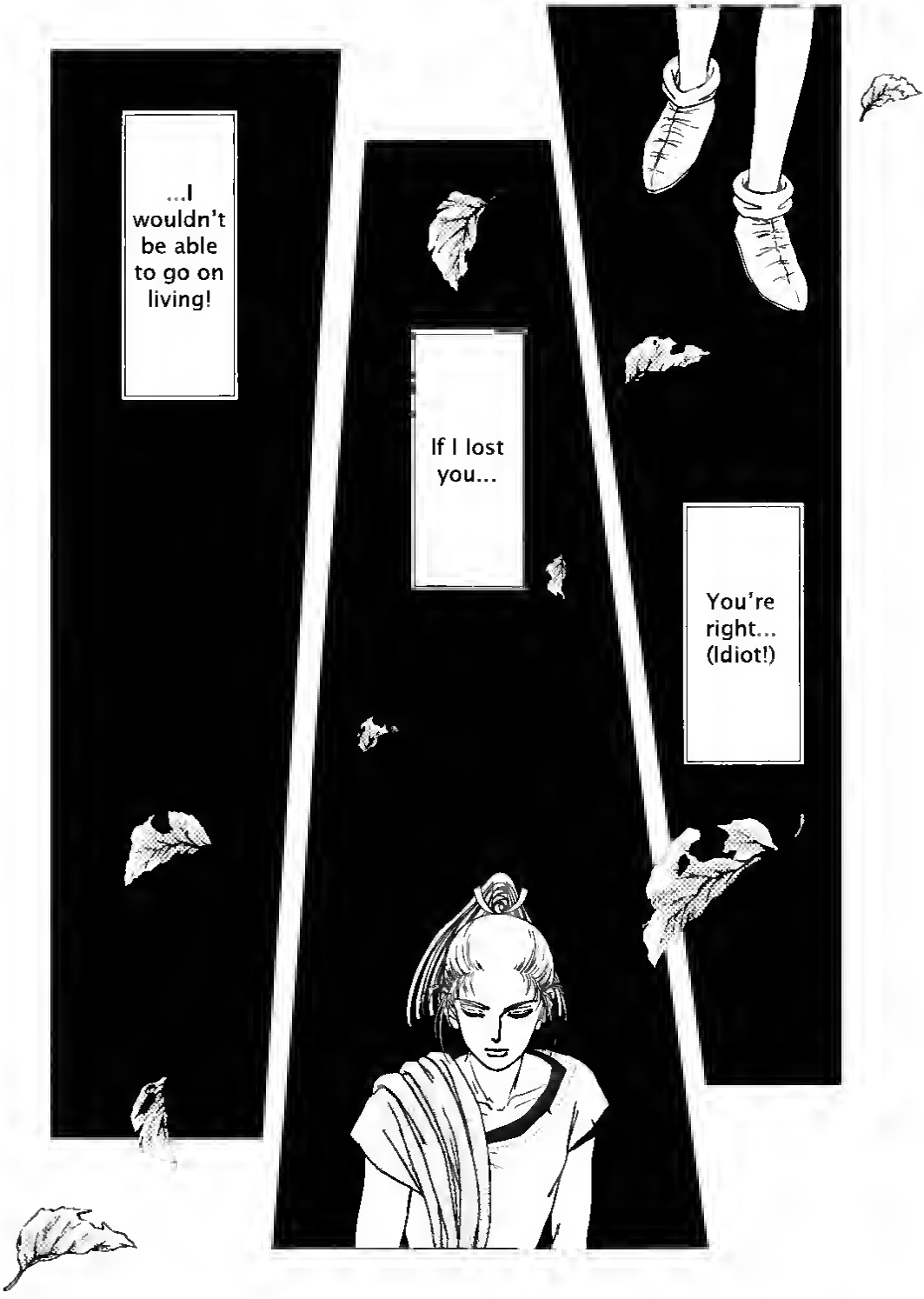

Aohiko doesn't think he'll survive.

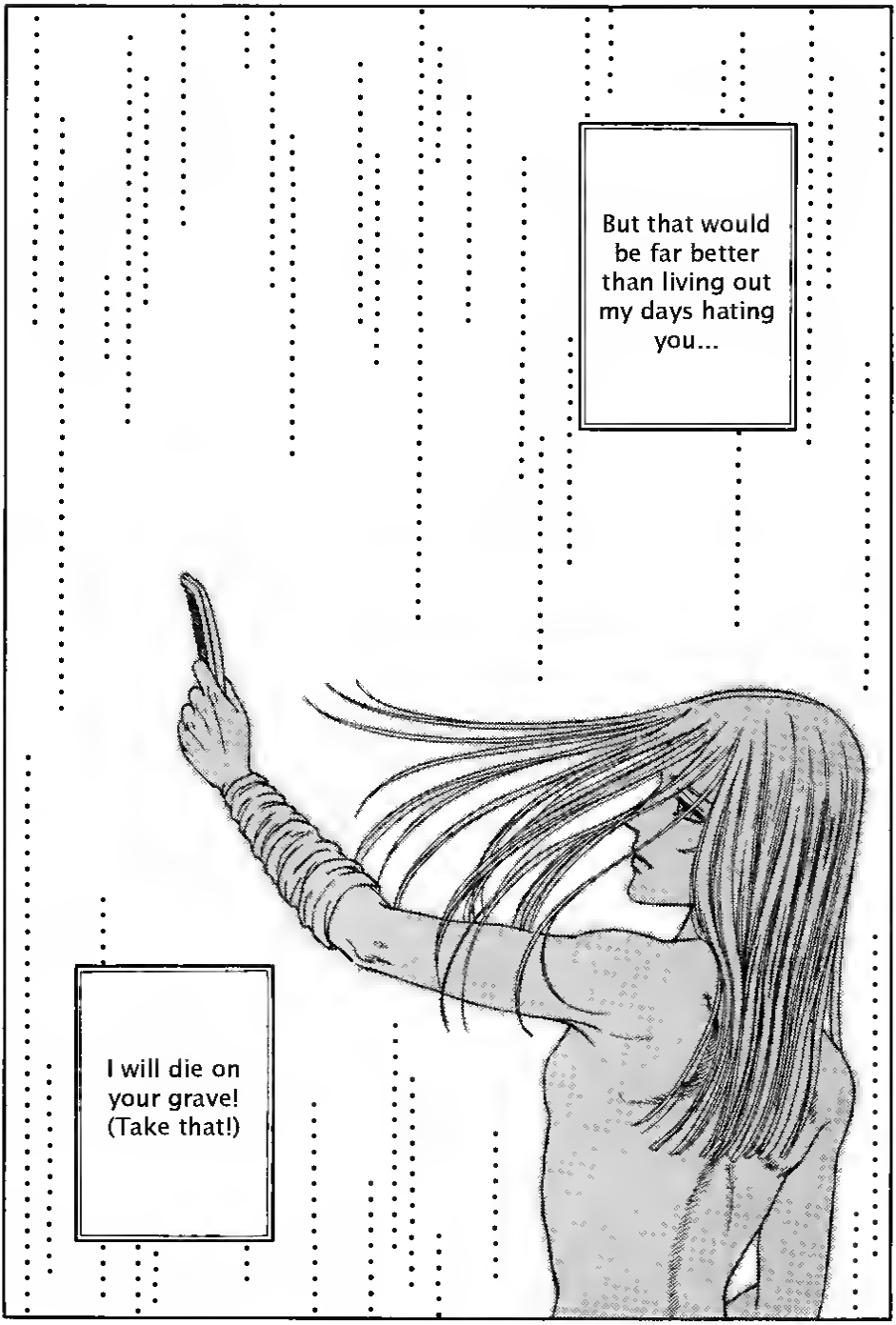
Misen ...


I didn't mean to eavesdrop or interrupt, but...
...it's not fair to Katsura if this goes on like this.


Isn't that right?
He's worried about what would happen to you... whether he left you behind or not.
I'm not that weak!
Please...
What? Did you think...
...I'd follow you to your death?

I was this close to hating him...
Thank you, Misen.
Hm...
It might have been better if she hated me...


...I wouldn't be able to go on living!
If I lost you...
You're right... (Idiot!)

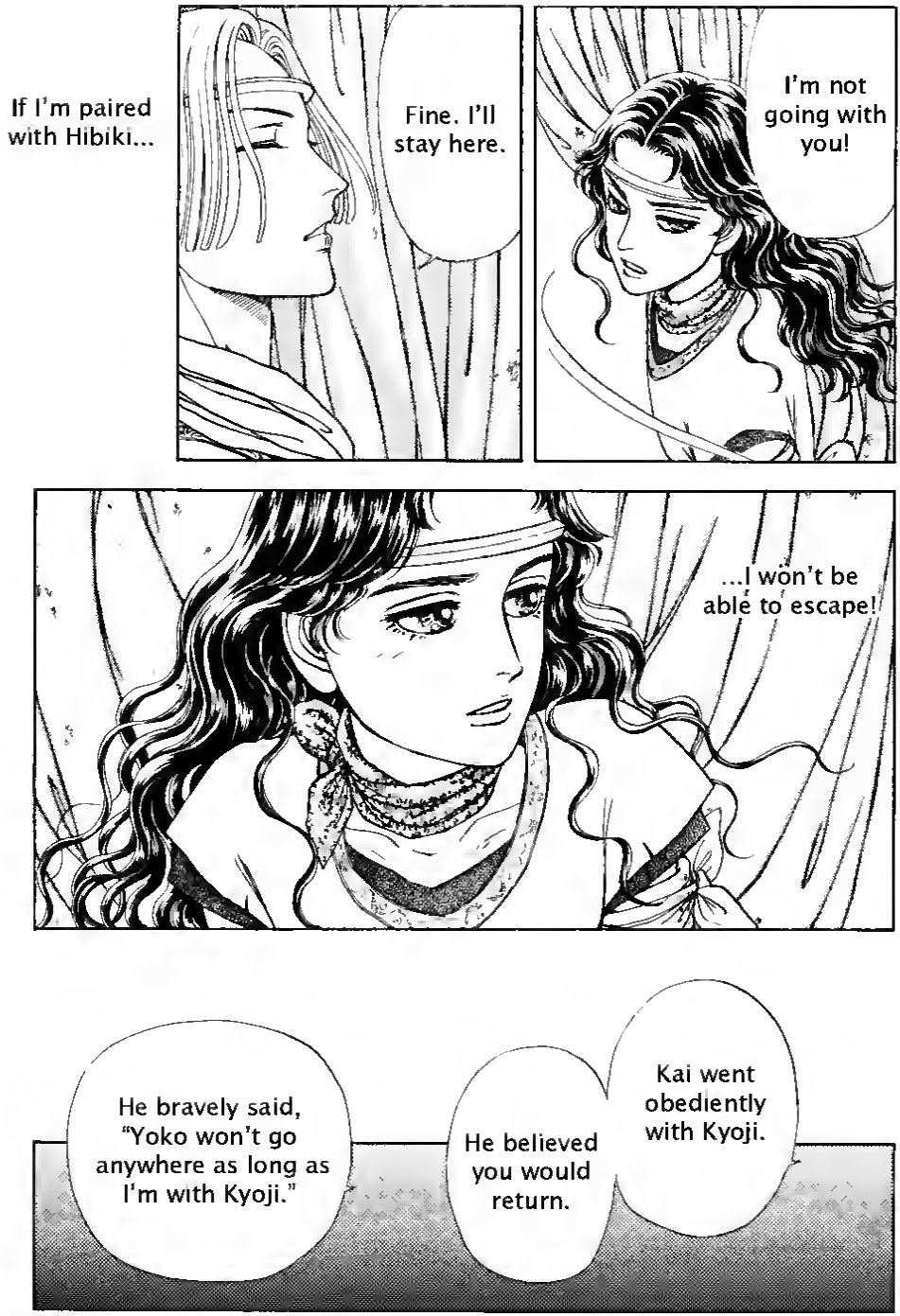

But that would be far better than living out my days hating you...
I will die on your grave! (Take that!)

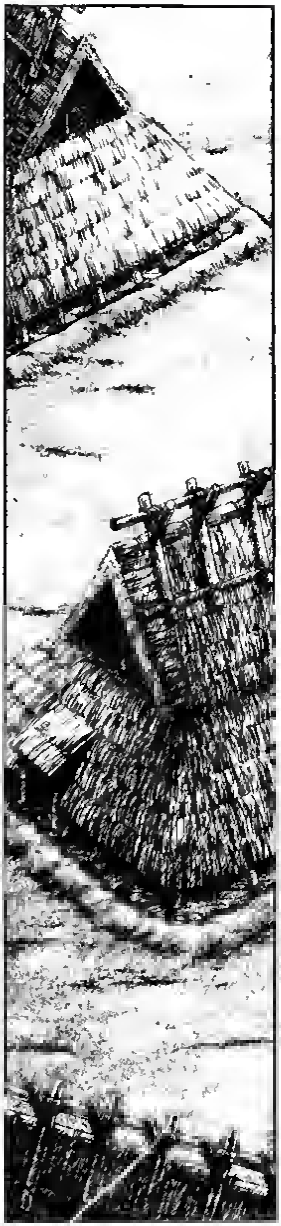
It's almost dawn
Where have you been?

Where's Kai?
I guess you couldn't desert him after all...
A search for you... Kai's execution...
If you hadn't returned by morning, there would've been a big uproar...

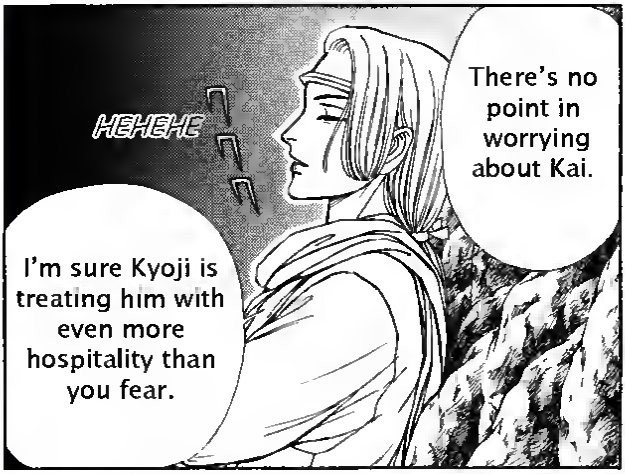
He's with Kyoji?
In the custody of Kyoji.
Kai's the one who told the Captain you've been acting strange...
Was that your idea!?
And you're in my custody.
Didn't Nachi tell you?
I killed my twin with my own hands. Anyone would become a little unhinged.

Now I think it's more than a little.
...
I thought you were a little unhinged too...
Those eyes...
Did they ever shine this much...?
I don't suppose you're going to tell me what happened to you...
...but Kiyu will discover what lies in your heart soon enough.


If I'm paired with Hibiki...
Fine. I'll stay here.
I'm not going with you!
...I won't be able to escape!
He bravely said, "Yoko won't go anywhere as long as I'm with Kyoji."
He believed you would return.
Kai went obediently with Kyoji.



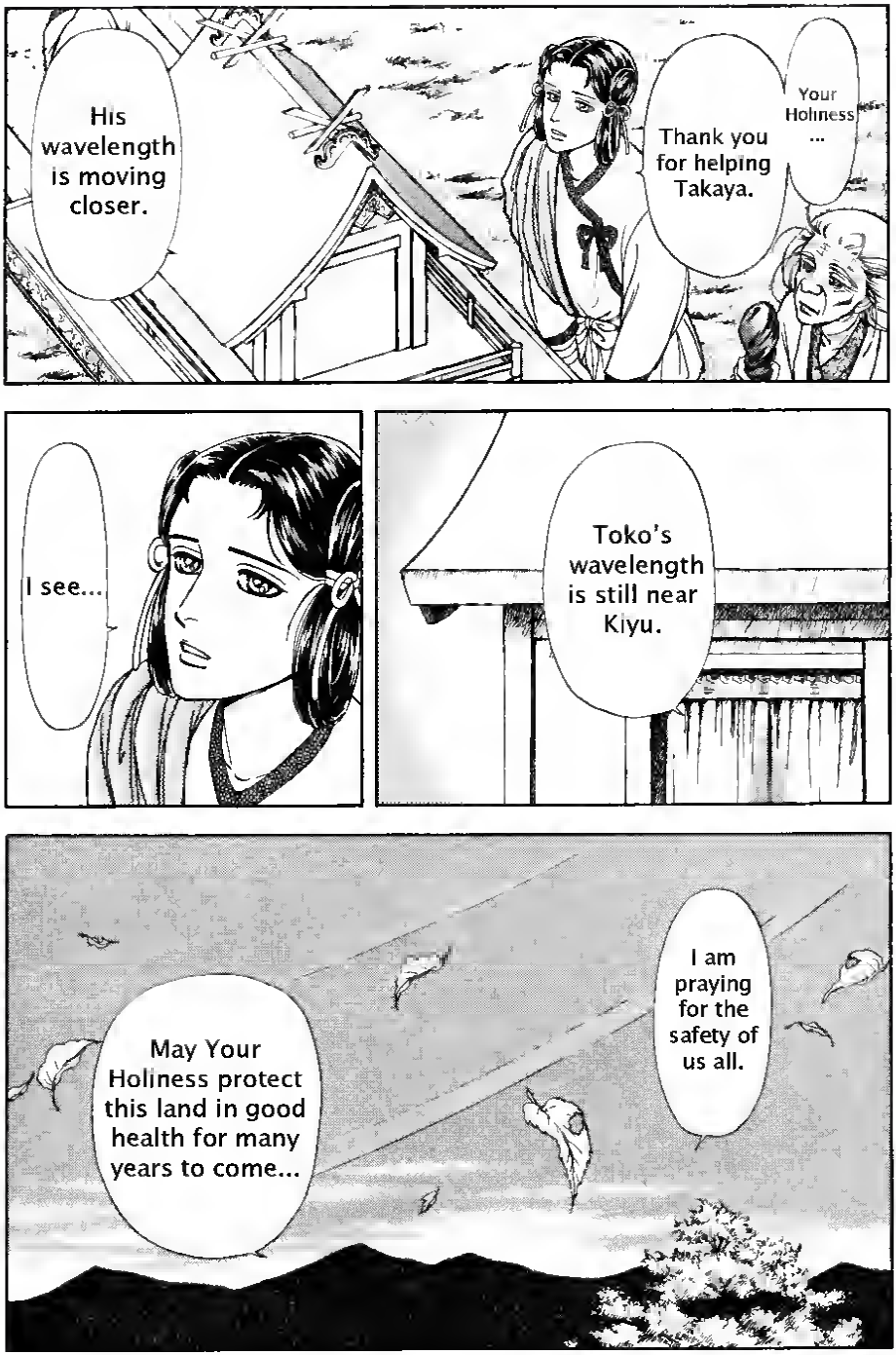
Kai, you idiot!


HEHEHE
There's no point in worrying about Kai.
I'm sure Kyoji is treating him with even more hospitality than you fear.

AH-CHOO
Kai, you complete idiot!

Everyone here?
No one's missing?

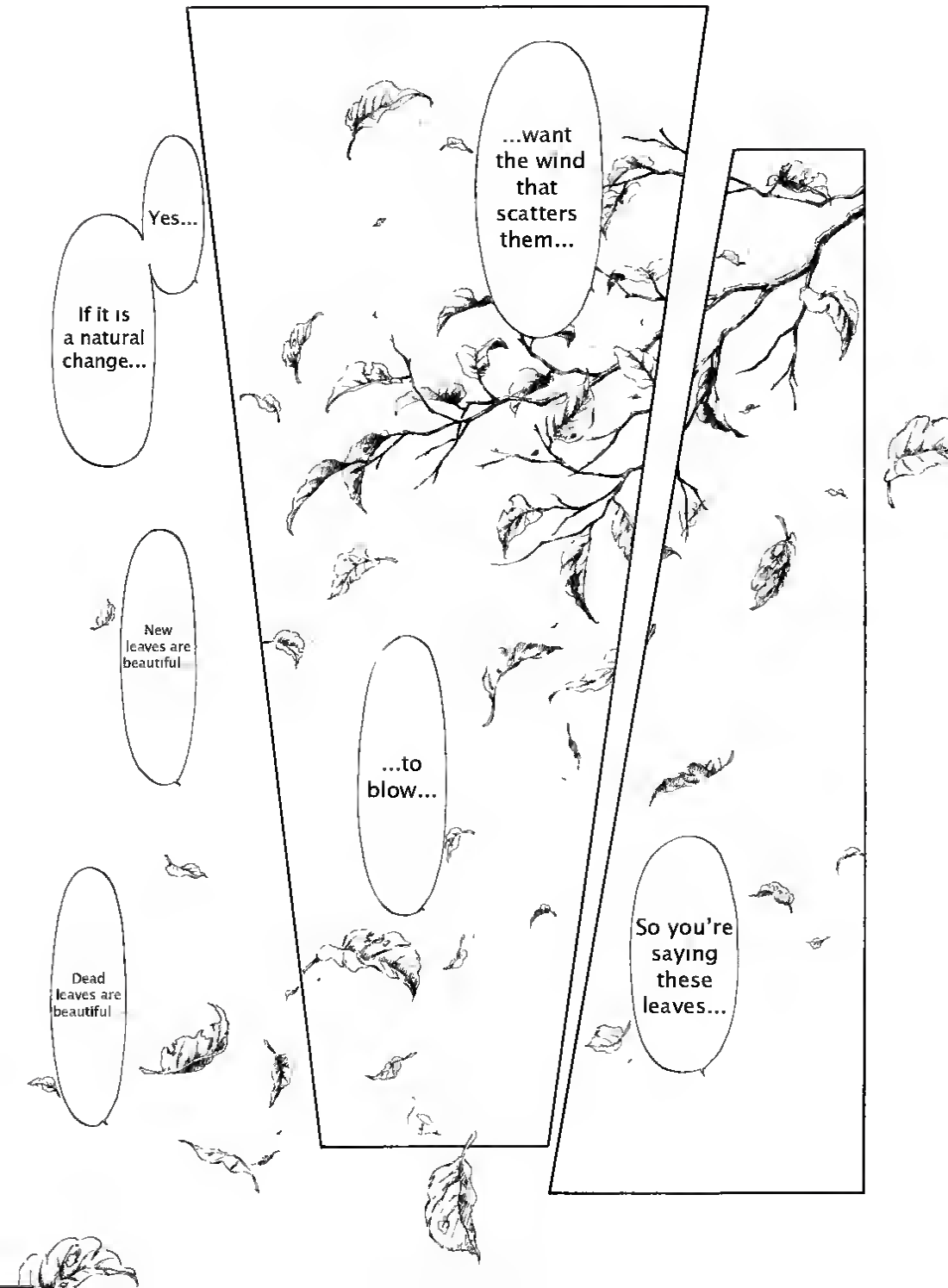
Katsura ...
I know!
"Be careful to cover your tracks..."
"...and not break any branches on the way," right?
When Risson returns, report things to him as you see fit.
Got it!
Aohiko ...
Kiyora would like to speak with you...


His wavelength is moving closer.
Thank you for helping Takaya.
Your Holiness ...
I see...
Toko's wavelength is still near Kiyu.
May Your Holiness protect this land in good health for many years to come...
I am praying for the safety of us all.

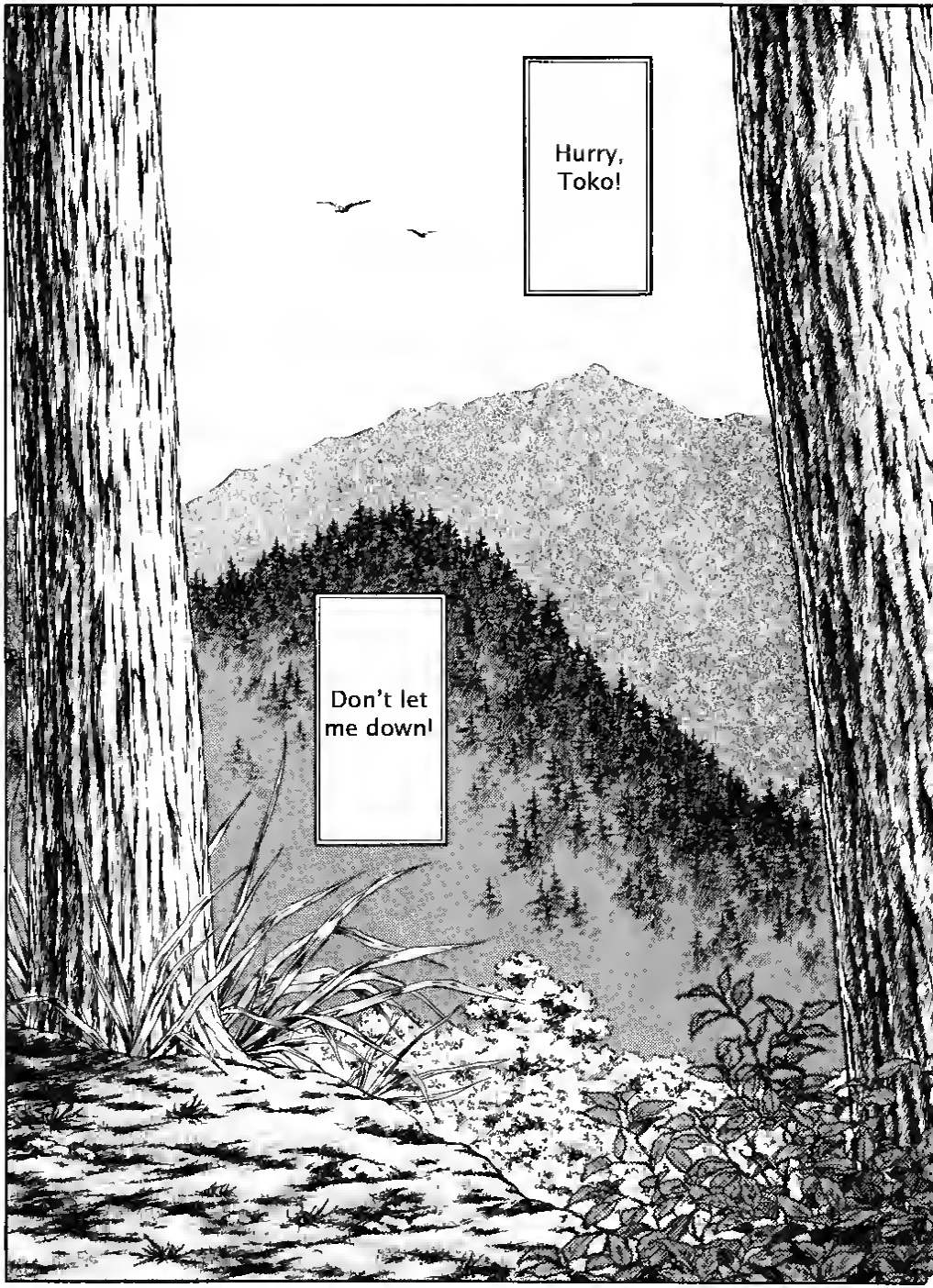
SWISH
SWISH
SWISH
SWISH
SWISH
SWISH

...
What an incomparable smile.
I wasn't...
...able to do anything for Katsura...
I guess she's ready for anything...

I wouldn't say that...
A woman who can smile that beautifully must be happy.
Death is not beautiful. And self-sacrifice...
...is ultimately transient and vain.
Yes...!
But the same is true of life...
It is only human life and death that drift awkwardly between beauty and ugliness.
In reality, there is no such thing as beauty or ugliness in nature... only change...
It is the way of the human mind to perceive this change as beautiful...

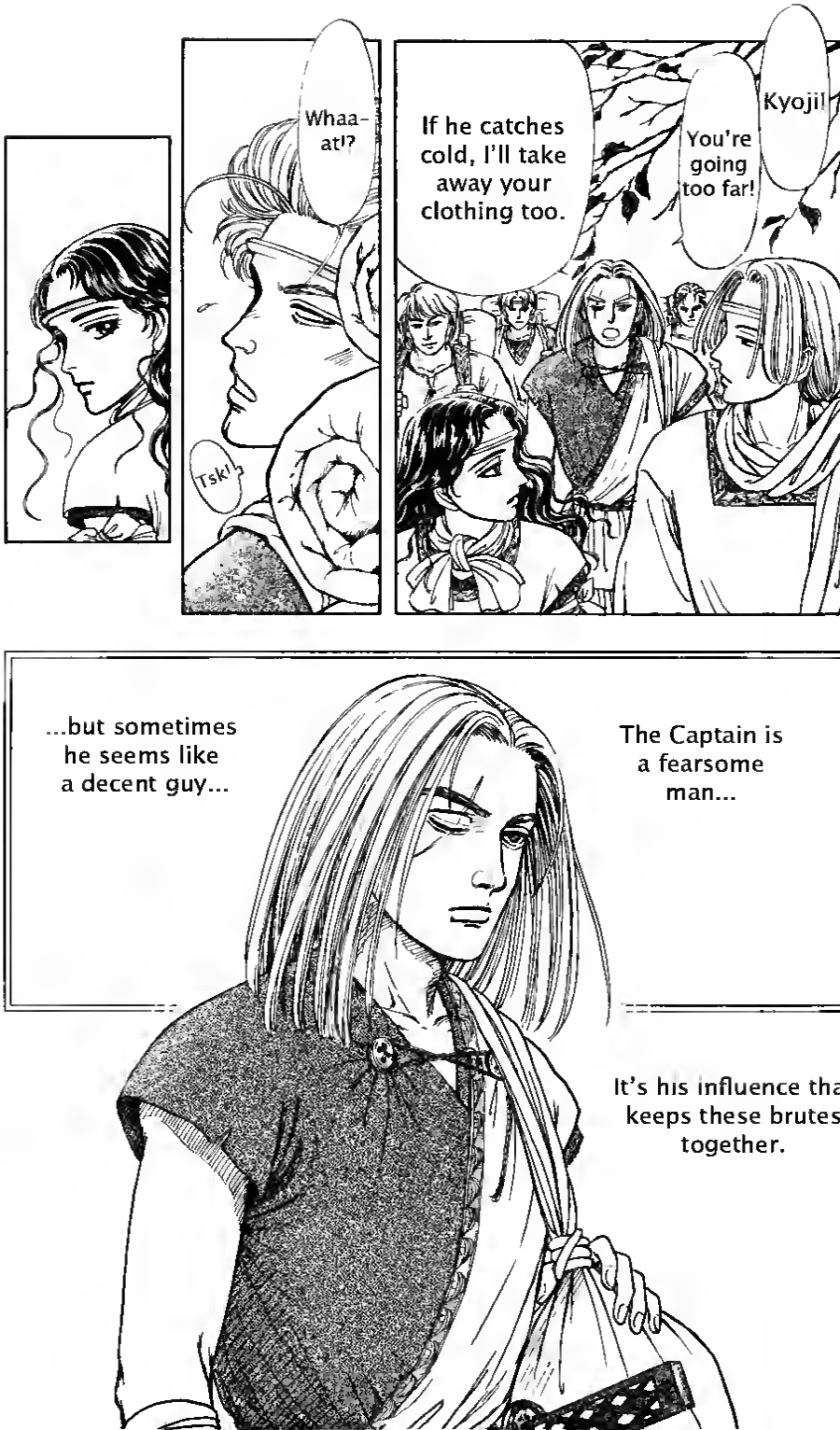

Yes...
If it is a natural change...
New leaves are beautiful
Dead leaves are beautiful
...want the wind that scatters them...
...to blow...
So you're saying these leaves...

Past four mountains to the north... Two more to go!
It'll take a day and a half even for me.


Hurry, Toko!
Don't let me down!

Watch out. He's more ferocious than he looks.
He he
AHAHAHA
A red mane!
What an exotic animal you've got there.
Kyoji!
He looks like a gentle fawn.
I don't believe it.
I disciplined him a bit.
He he!

Kai!
Yoko!
...
Pret-ty?
I told you your mane was pretty, didn't I!?
Stand tall, Kai!

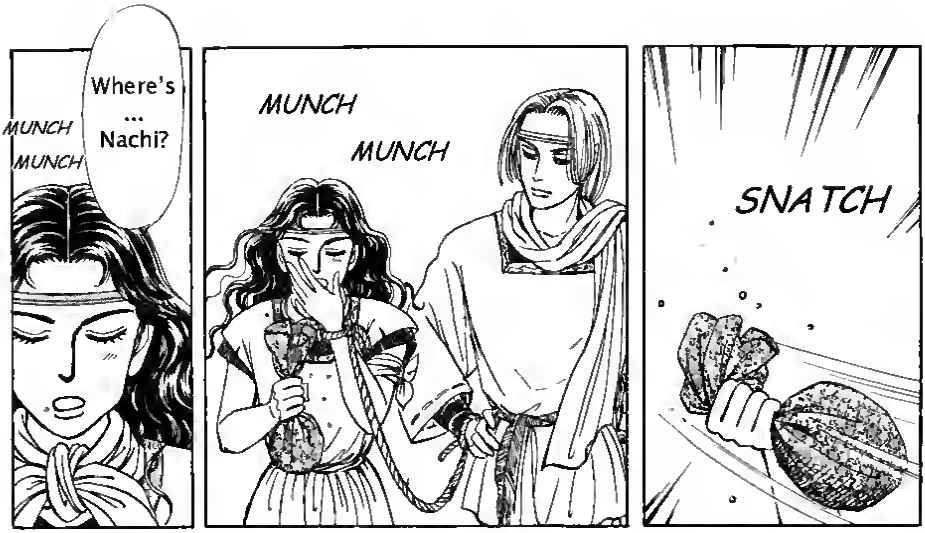

Whaa-at!?
Tsk!
If he catches cold, I'll take away your clothing too.
You're going too far!
Kyoji!
...but sometimes he seems like a decent guy...
The Captain is a fearsome man...
It's his influence that keeps these brutes together.

If it weren't for the Captain,
they'd each rush off
in their own direction...

Why is he so loyal
to the demon gods...

...to Kiyu?

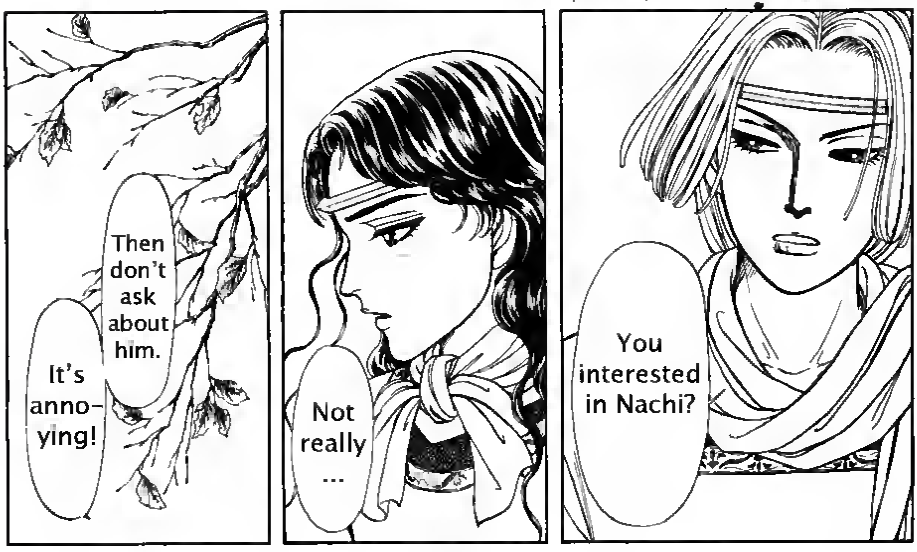
You haven't had anything since yesterday, have you?
Eat while you walk!
I'm not...
... thinking about anything ...
What are you thinking about?

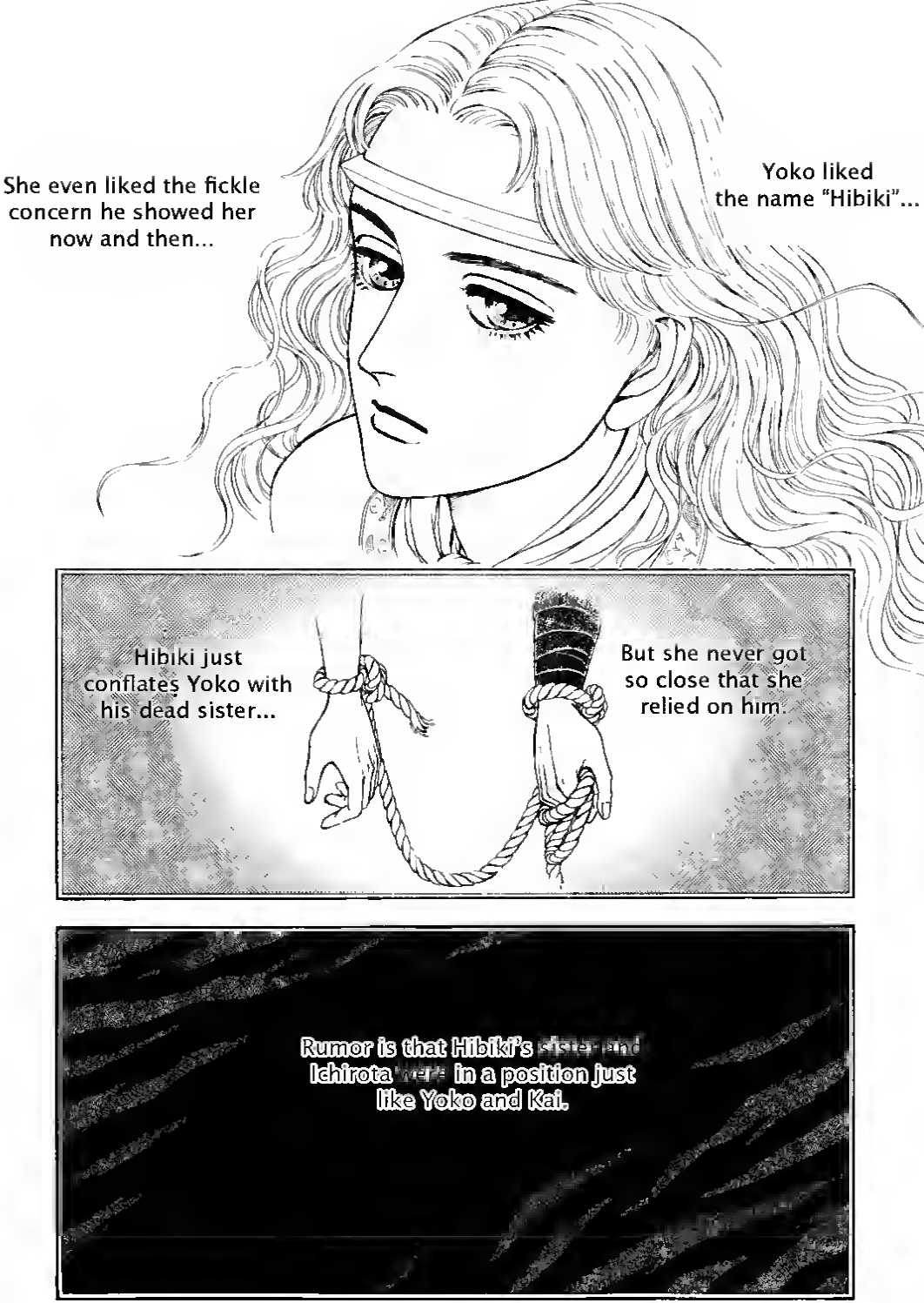


Near Kiyu...

Way at the back.

Nachi?




She even liked the fickle concern he showed her now and then...
Yoko liked the name "Hibiki"...
Hibiki just conflates Yoko with his dead sister...
But she never got so close that she relied on him.
Rumor is that Hibiki's sister and Ichirota were in a position just like Yoko and Kai.

...and she was killed...

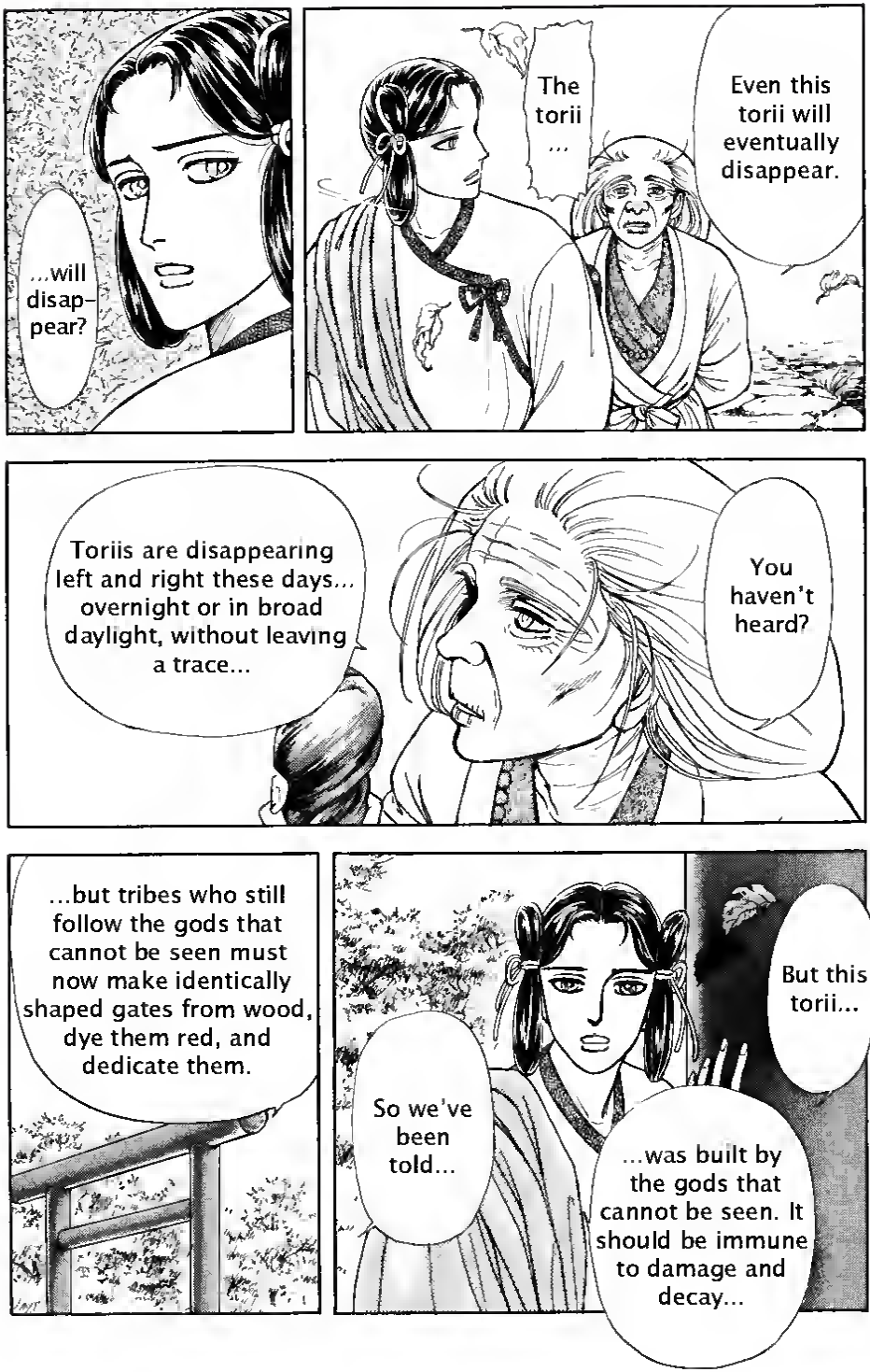
I don't know the details, but they say Ichirota left Hibiki's sister behind when he ran away...

Hibiki must have changed since then...

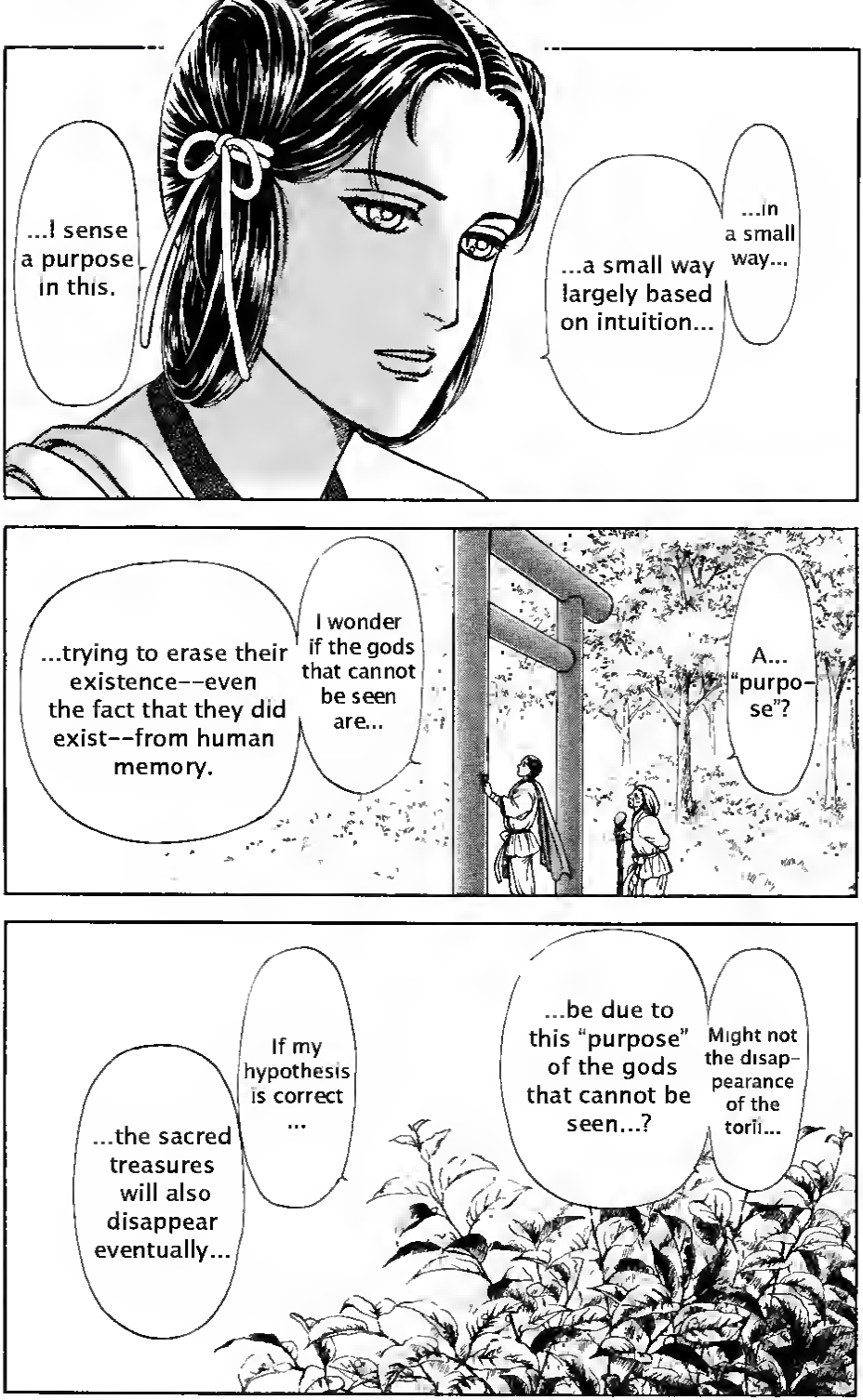
"Ruthless" is the most fitting word for Yoko's memories of him...

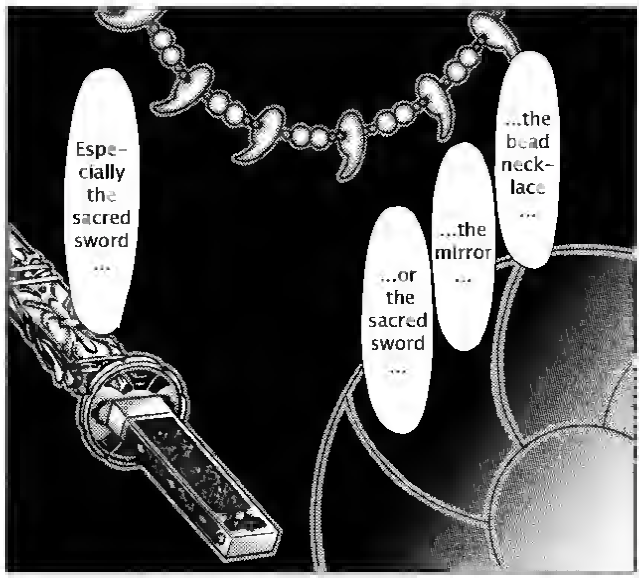
His coldness... as icy as melting snow... may have felt comforting to Yoko's dark side...

So she consciously withdrew even further from him.

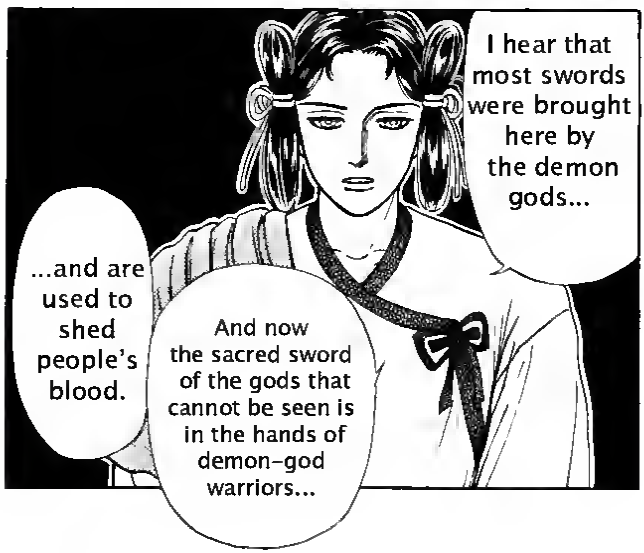

...will disap-pear?
The torii ...
Even this torii will eventually disappear.
Toriis are disappearing left and right these days... overnight or in broad daylight, without leaving a trace...
You haven't heard?
...but tribes who still follow the gods that cannot be seen must now make identically shaped gates from wood, dye them red, and dedicate them.
So we've been told...
But this torii...
...was built by the gods that cannot be seen. It should be immune to damage and decay...

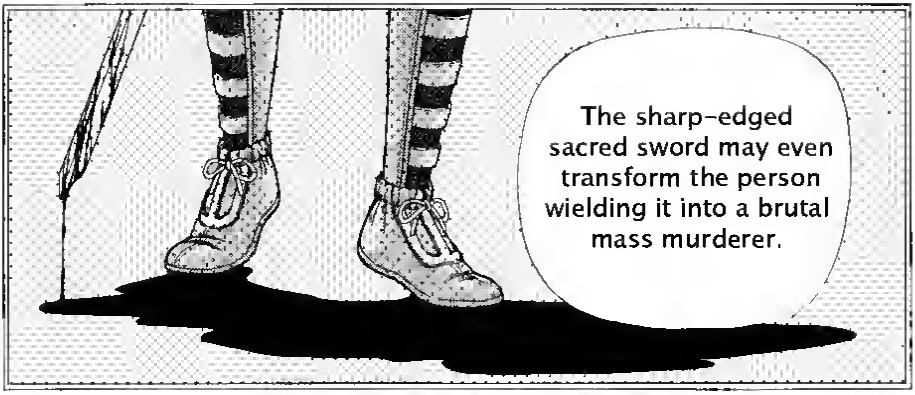
...I've become sure of after leaving my home and living among the rocks and trees...
...is that the gods that cannot be seen still dwell somewhere in these mountains and seas.
The one thing ...
But...
Knowledge of them is fading year after year in tribes everywhere...


...I sense a purpose in this.
...a small way largely based on intuition...
...in a small way...
...trying to erase their existence--even the fact that they did exist--from human memory.
I wonder if the gods that cannot be seen are...
A... "purpose"?
...the sacred treasures will also disappear eventually...
If my hypothesis is correct ...
...be due to this "purpose" of the gods that cannot be seen...?
Might not the disappearance of the torii...



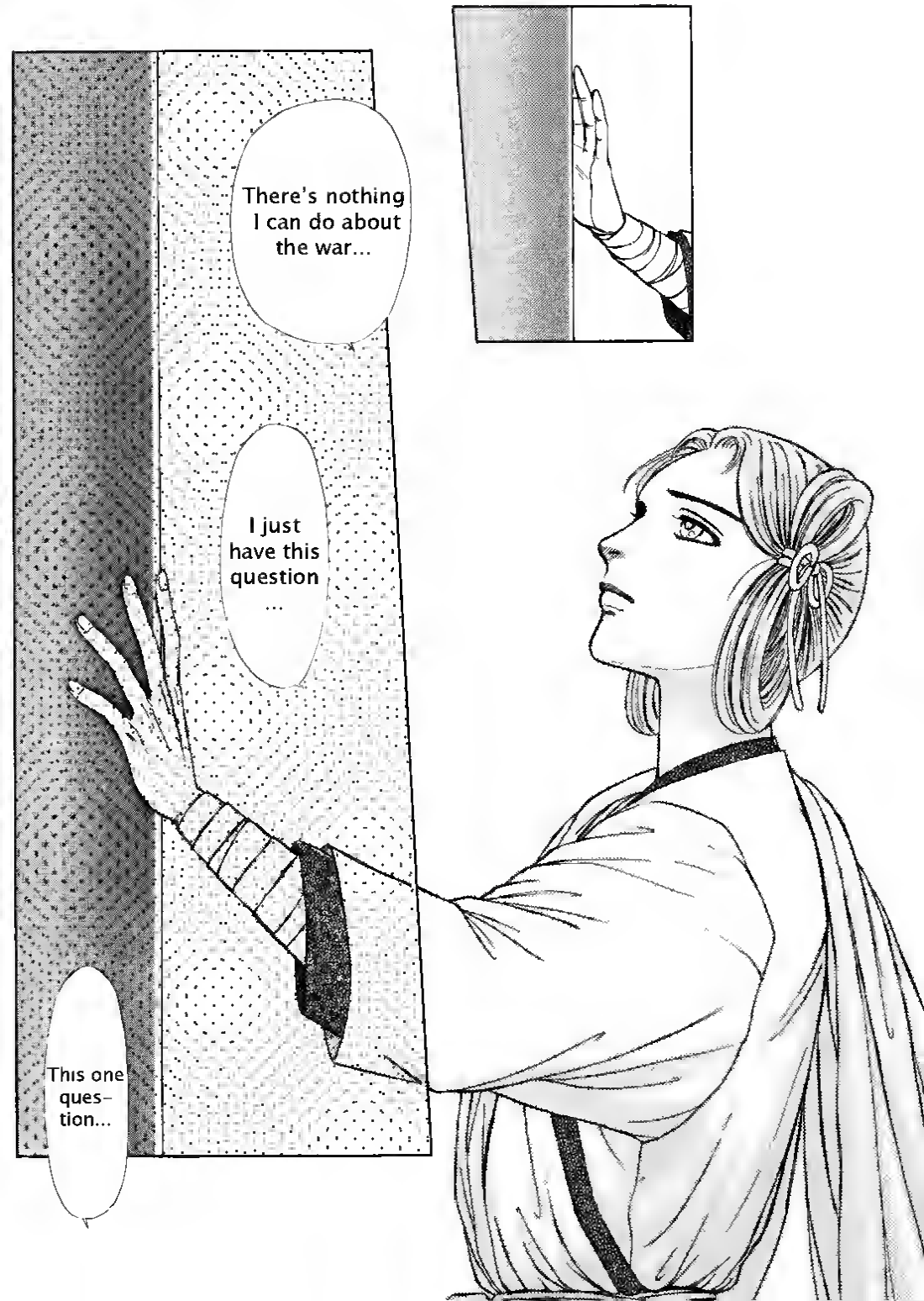
...despite the fact that we haven't even figured out the true significance of...

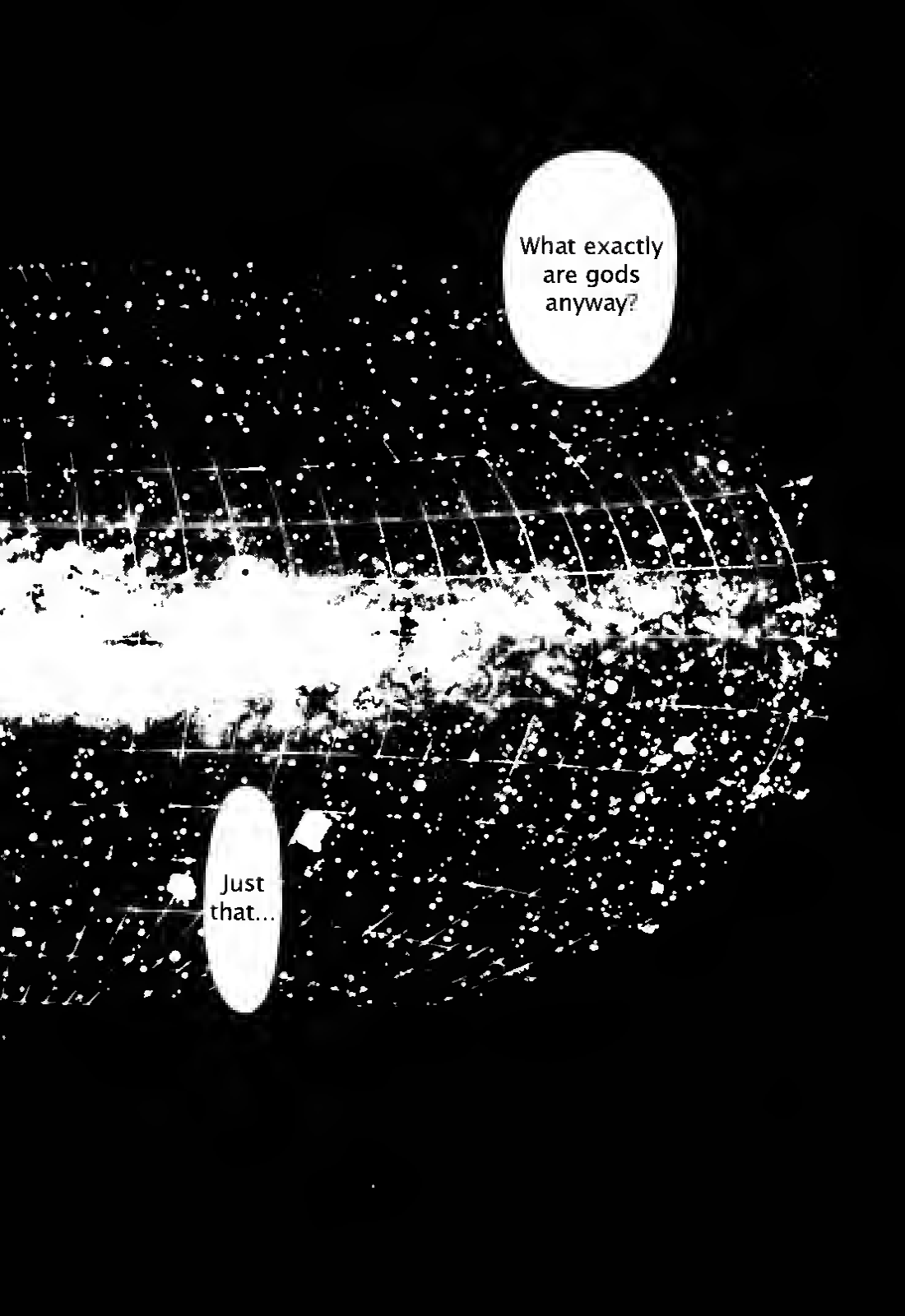

I hear that most swords were brought here by the demon gods...
...and are used to shed people's blood.
And now the sacred sword of the gods that cannot be seen is in the hands of demon-god warriors...

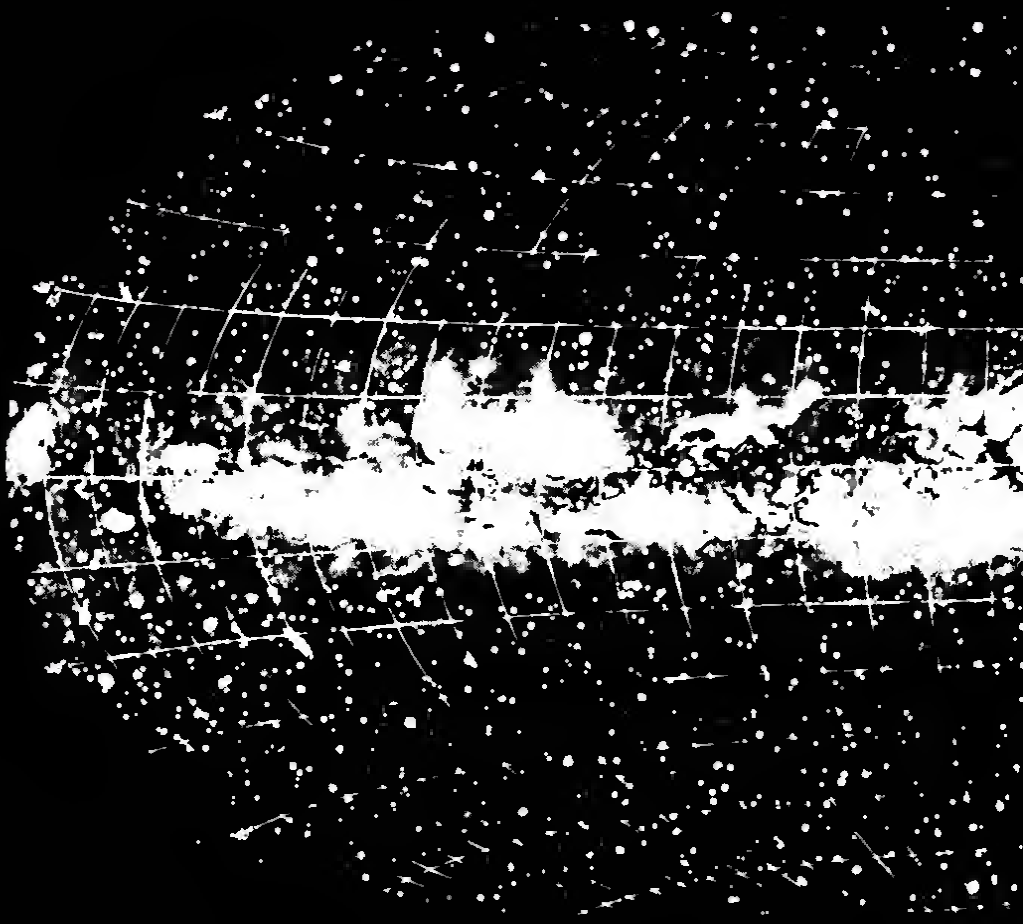

The sharp-edged sacred sword may even transform the person wielding it into a brutal mass murderer.

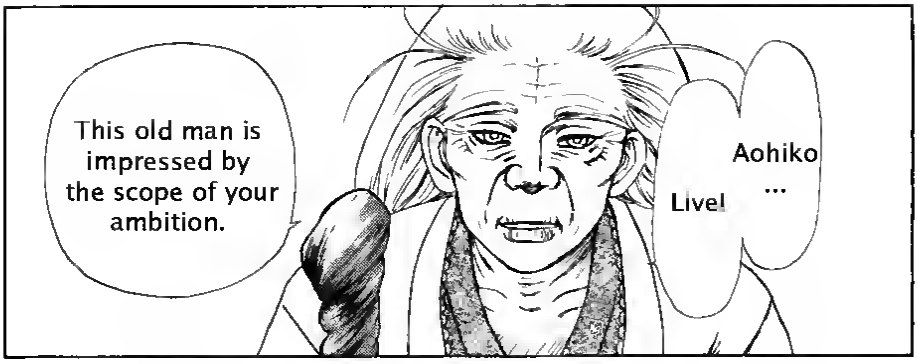
...that would encourage war...?
Why... why did they give us a sacred sword...

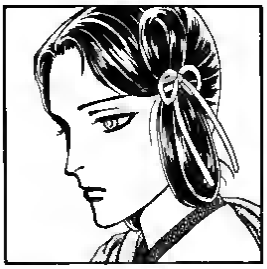
Why didn't they give us something that would prevent war?


There's nothing I can do about the war...
I just have this question ...
This one ques-tion...


What exactly are gods anyway?
Just that...

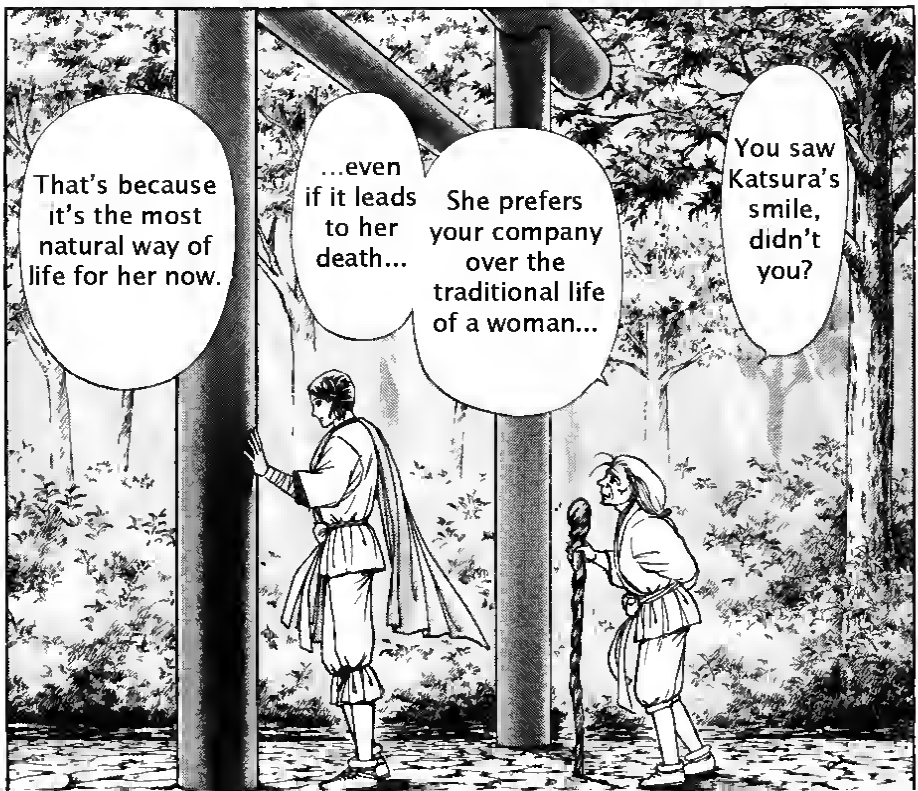


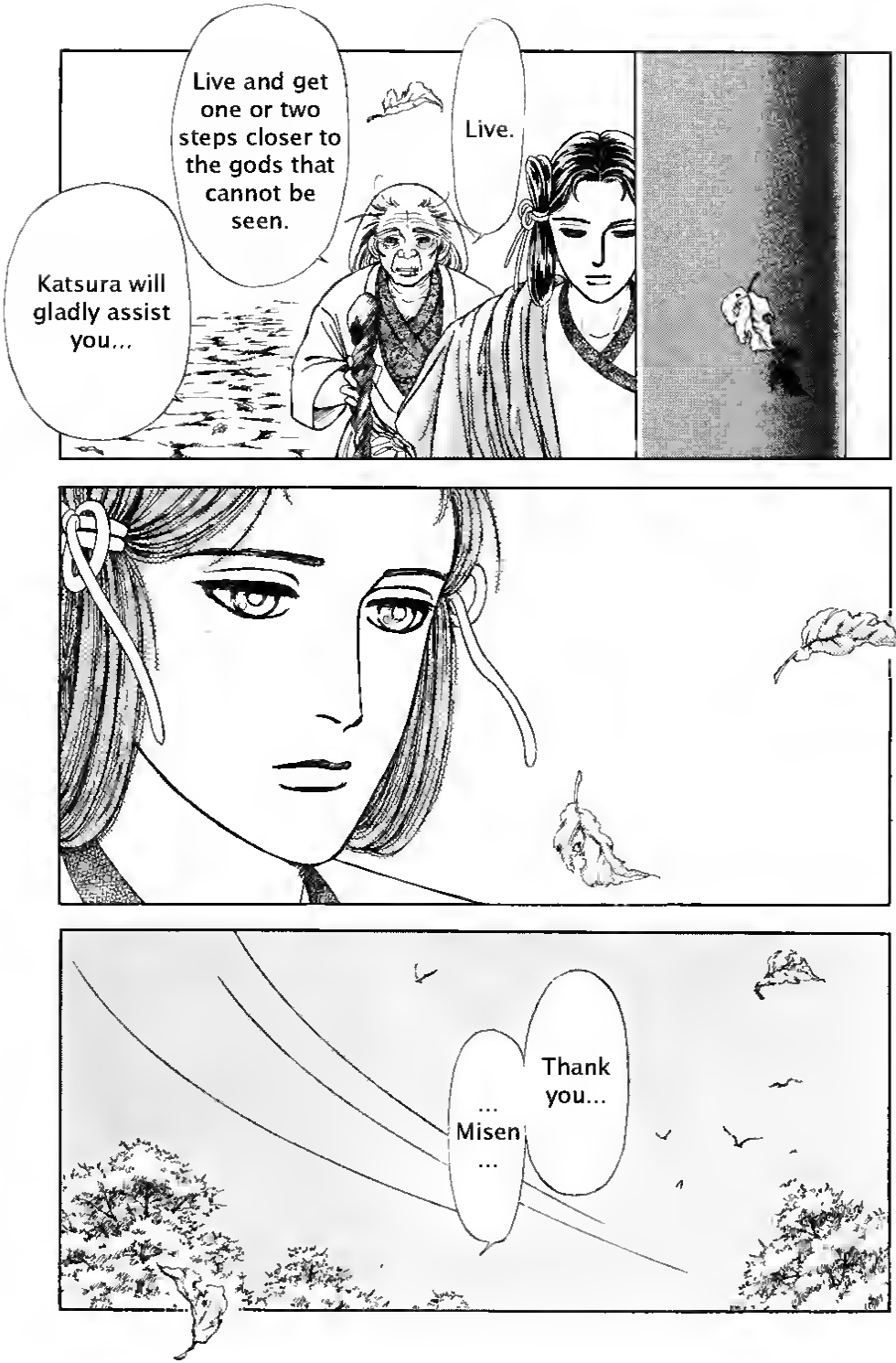




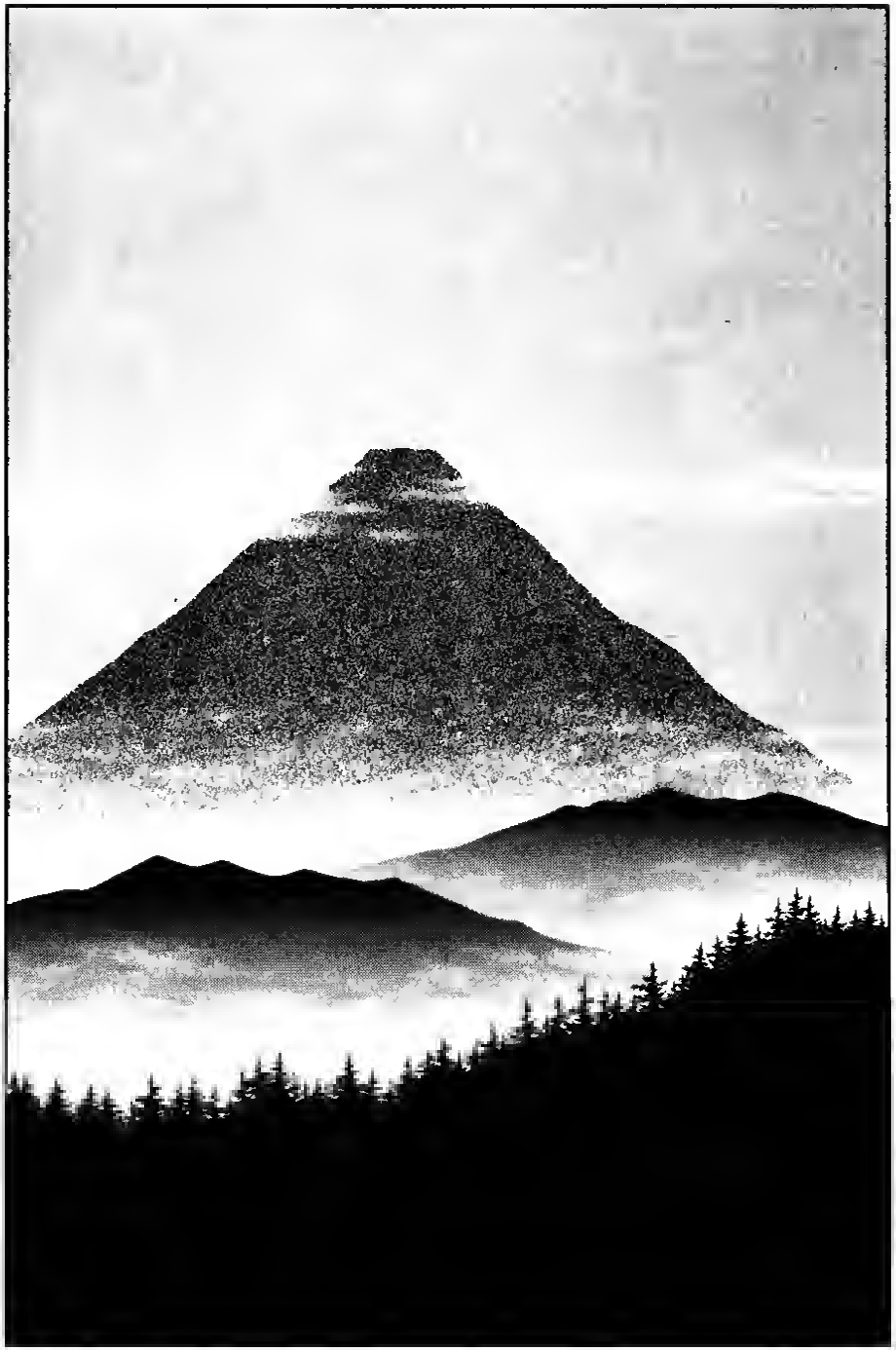
But you don't understand how women think...

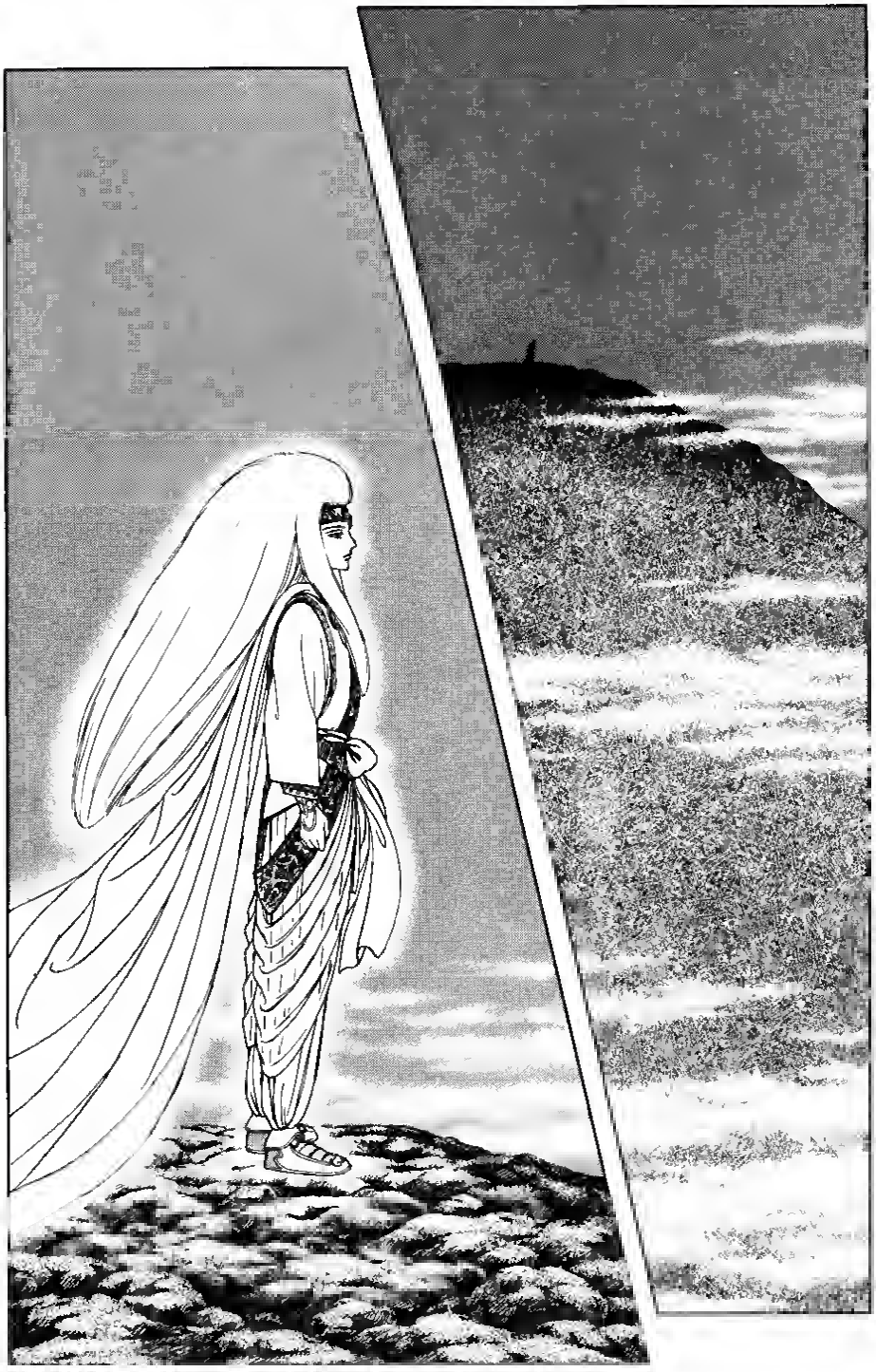
Your aim to protect this land to the point of forsaking that ambition is probably motivated by a desire for Katsura's happiness...

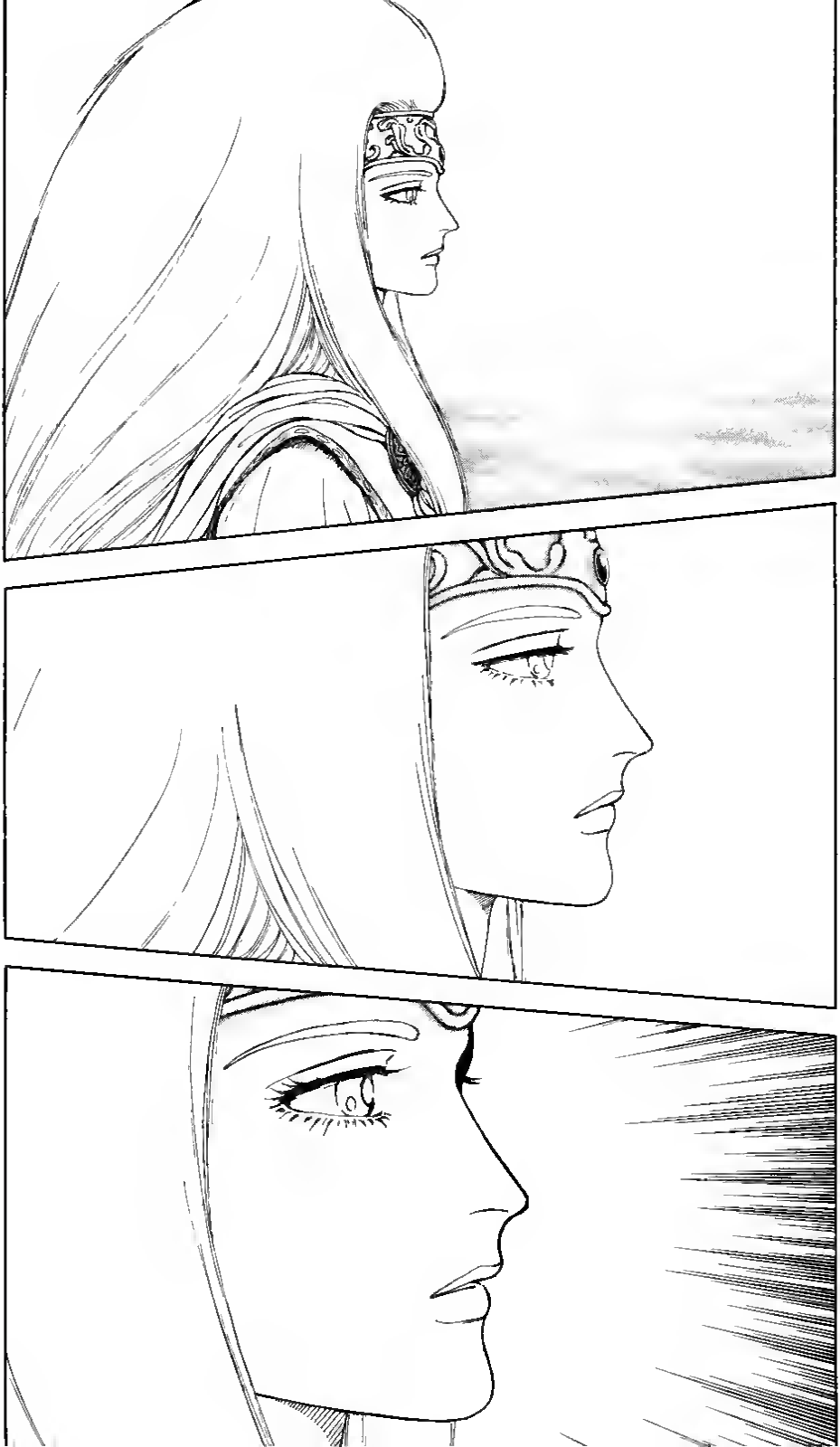

That's because it's the most natural way of life for her now.
...even if it leads to her death...
She prefers your company over the traditional life of a woman...
You saw Katsura's smile, didn't you?

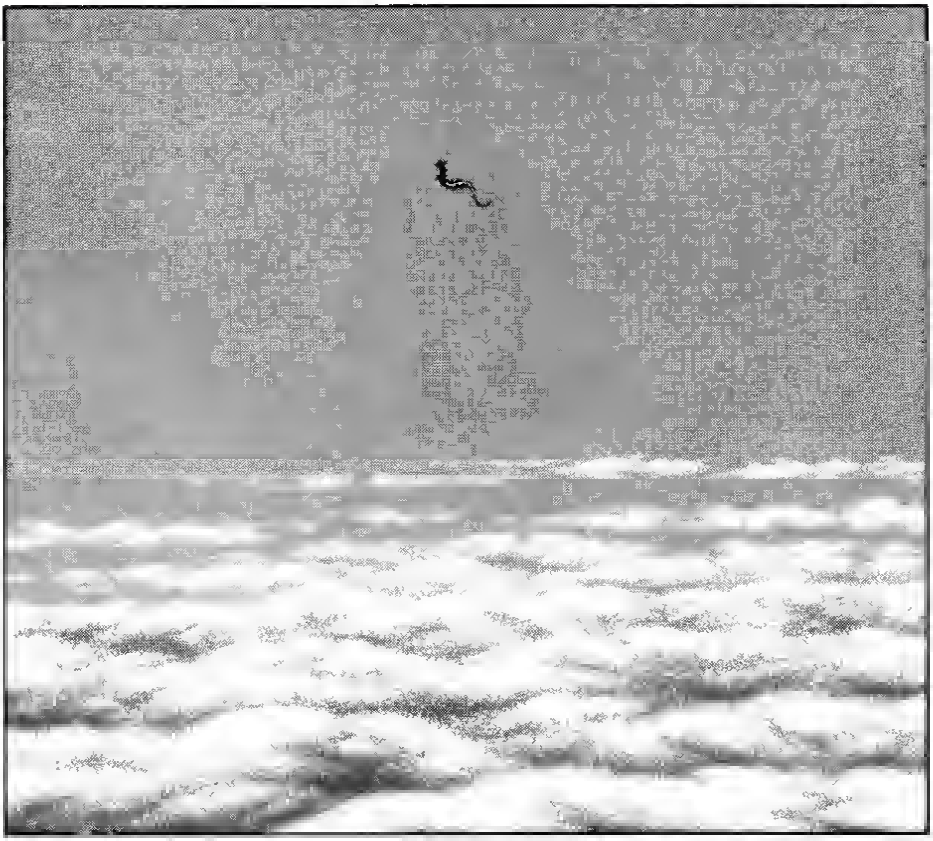

Live and get one or two steps closer to the gods that cannot be seen.
Live.
Katsura will gladly assist you...
Thank you...
... Misen ...

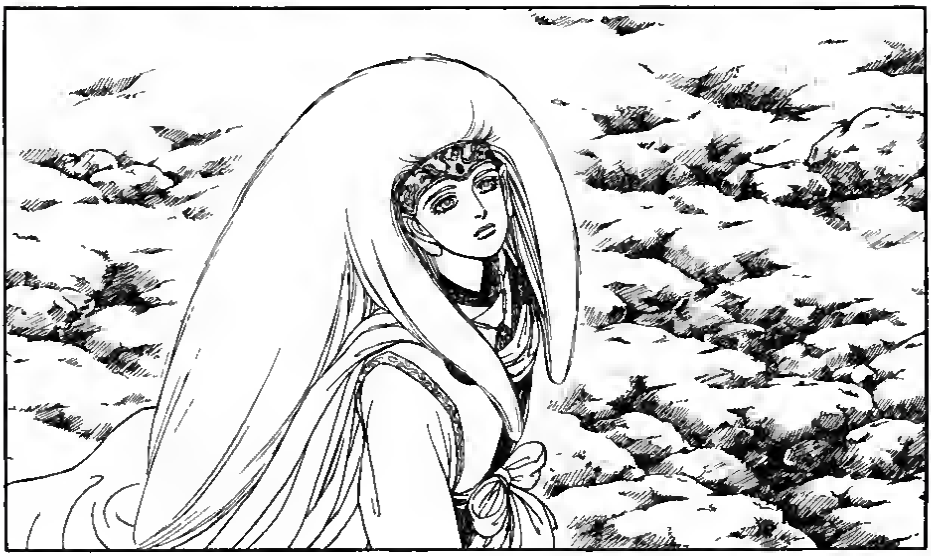
Let's devise a strategy.
One that will 5 be as advantageous as possible ...



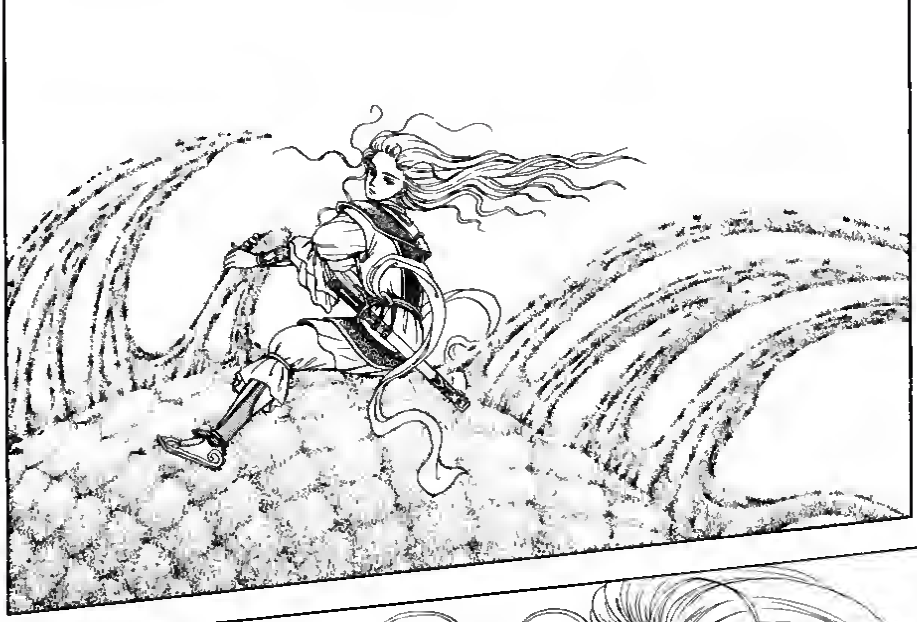








A demigod?

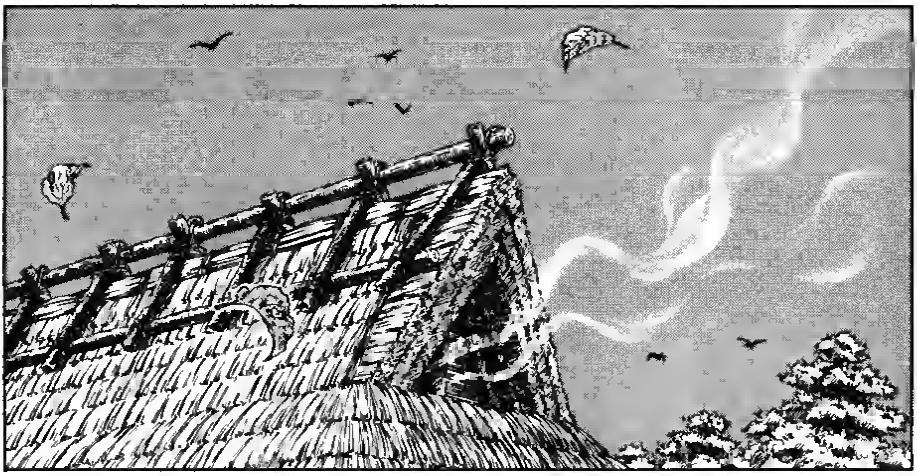


...

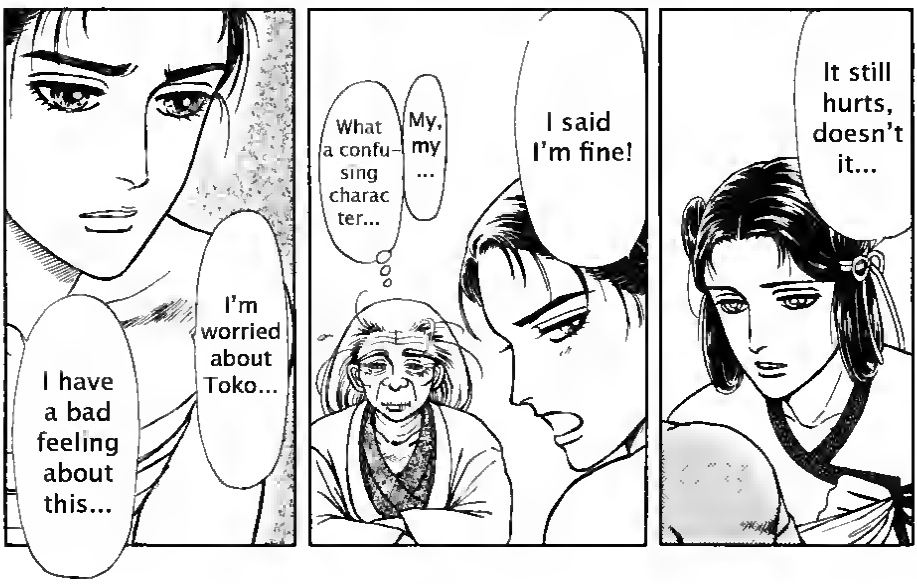
Not a demigod...

...or a demon god...

Aohi-
ko!
Aohi-
ko-o!
WOOHOO!
Taka-
ya!



I'm fine now.
It will take some time to completely heal.


I have a bad feeling about this...
I'm worried about Toko...
What a confu-sing charac ter...
My, my ...
I said I'm fine!
It still hurts, doesn't it...

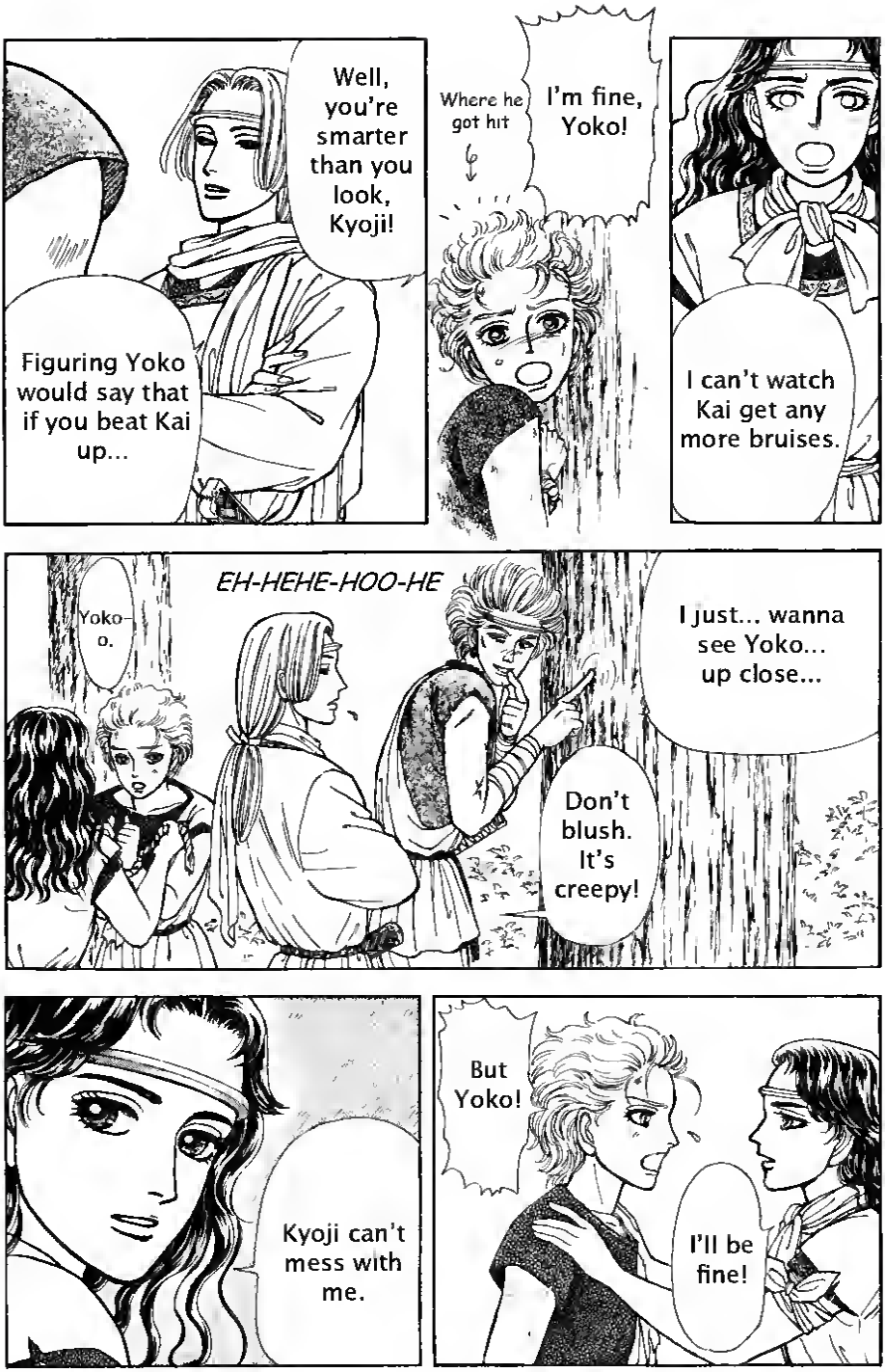
If you went back for her and botched it, the enemy would beef up security.
All we can do is believe in her.
Victory over the humans depends on the yin stone...
Can we win!?
So what's the verdict?
That's why people assume you're "cold"!
You speak the truth too directly, Aohiko!
...
... she...
Even if Toko makes it in time...
Teach me the yin stone mantra.
Even if she remembers the mantra, she may not be able to make the sounds she wants to!
...and a different throat.
...she has a different body now...

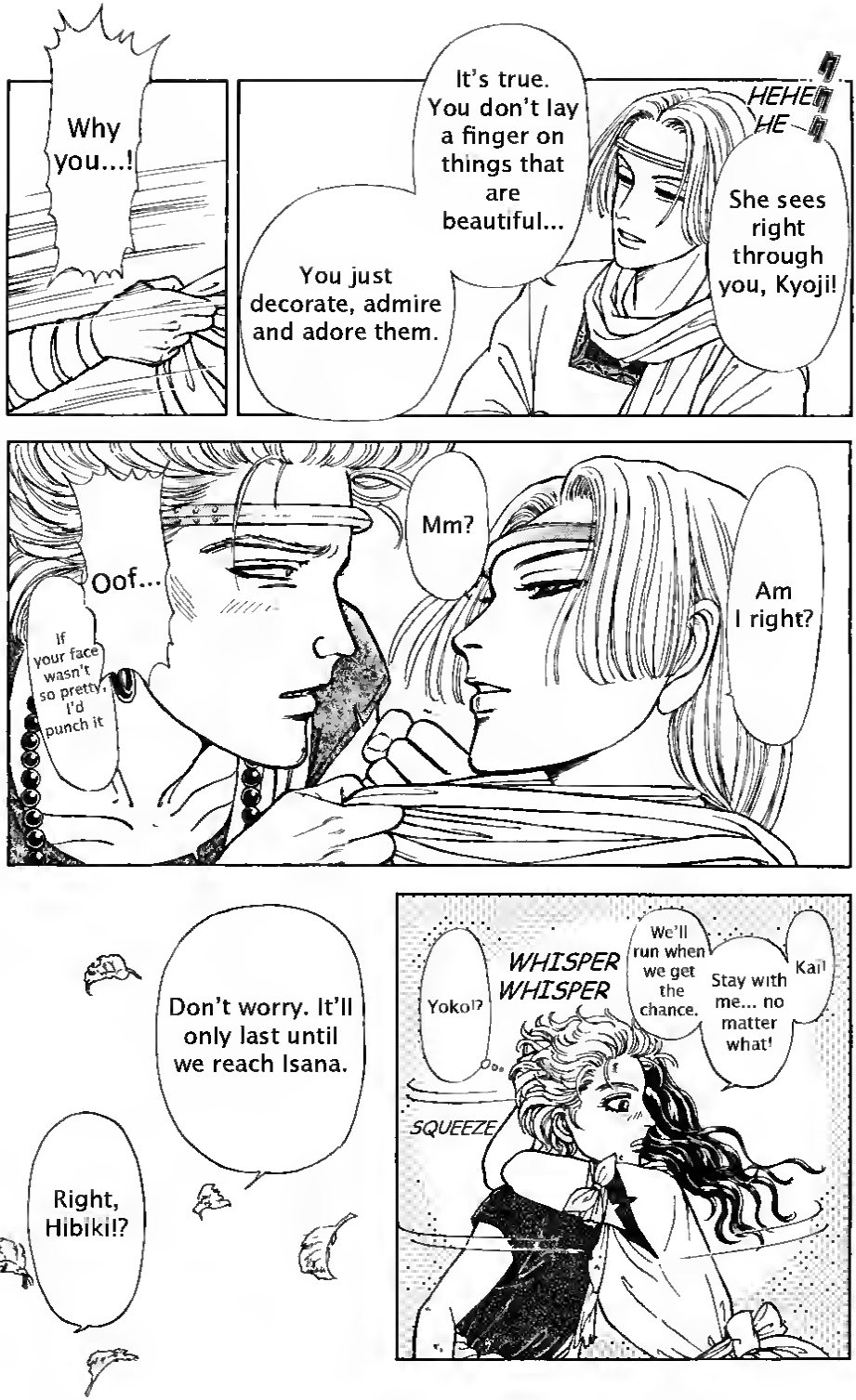
The yin stone mantra can't be learned in a night or so...
...
If Yoko knew the mantra, it would be different...
Aohi-ko!
Takaya ...
If you determine that my strategy has failed or I've died...
If that happens, run to the hidden valley and help the people of Isana escape.
Let me finish!
If you fail to act calmly, everyone will die.
Don't succumb to your emotions!
Unders-tand!?

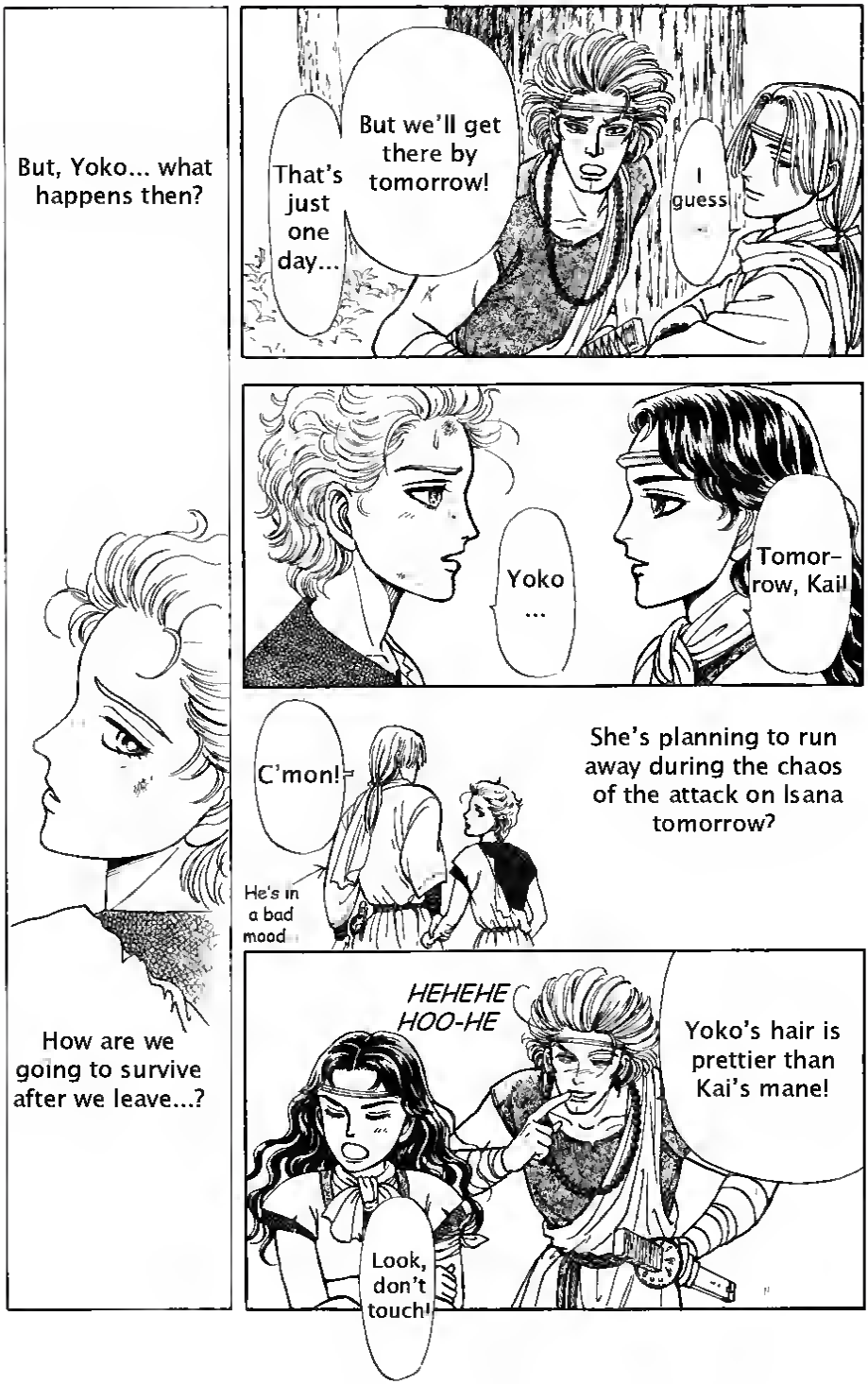
Got it.
...
Still... it's a big gamble.
If Toko can't chant the mantra for protecting herself against the yin stone, I'll try to help her.
I've never seen Aohiko so fired up... fired up in a cool-headed way...

You freak!
Leave me alone!
Let me stroke it, you ingrate!
I said I'd stroke your mane!
I'm gonna pull that mane out.
You i-idiot! Who would want to be stroked by you!?
I'm taking care of you!
RIP RIP
H-hey!
Poor guy.
Ahh!
RIP
Bullying the weak is Kyoji's way of killing time, isn't it.
I'll tell the Captain!

Yoko–o!
Kyoji! Knock it off!
Really ...?
I'll go into your custody!
Hand Kai over to Hibiki!
KONK
You okay with that, Yoko...?
Shut up!
If you go into his cus–tody...
Don't be stupid, Yoko!
EH-HEHE


Well, you're smarter than you look, Kyoji!
Figuring Yoko would say that if you beat Kai up...
Where he got hit
I'm fine, Yoko!
I can't watch Kai get any more bruises.
EH-HEHE-HOO-HE
Yoko-o.
I just... wanna see Yoko... up close...
Don't blush. It's creepy!
Kyoji can't mess with me.
But Yoko!
I'll be fine!

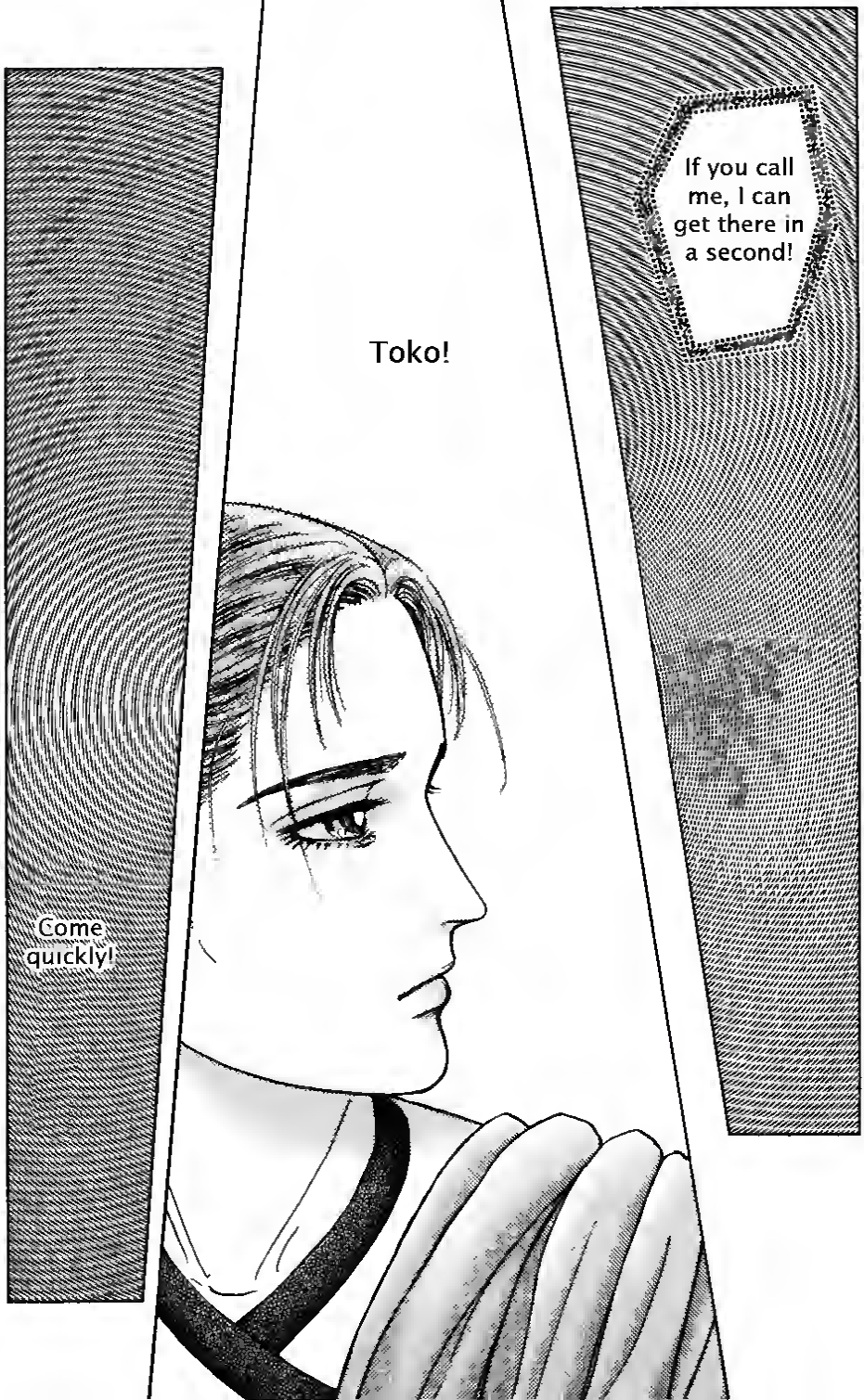

Why you...!
It's true. You don't lay a finger on things that are beautiful...
You just decorate, admire and adore them.
HEHEHE
She sees right through you, Kyoji!
Oof...
If your face wasn't so pretty, I'd punch it
Mm?
Am I right?
Don't worry. It'll only last until we reach Isana.
Right, Hibiki!?
WHISPER WHISPER
Yoko!?
We'll run when we get the chance.
Stay with me... no matter what!
Kai!
SQUEEZE


But, Yoko... what happens then?
That's just one day...
But we'll get there by tomorrow!
I guess
Yoko ...
Tomor-row, Kai!
C'mon!
He's in a bad mood
She's planning to run away during the chaos of the attack on Isana tomorrow?
How are we going to survive after we leave...?
HEHEHE HOO-HE
Yoko's hair is prettier than Kai's mane!
Look, don't touch!

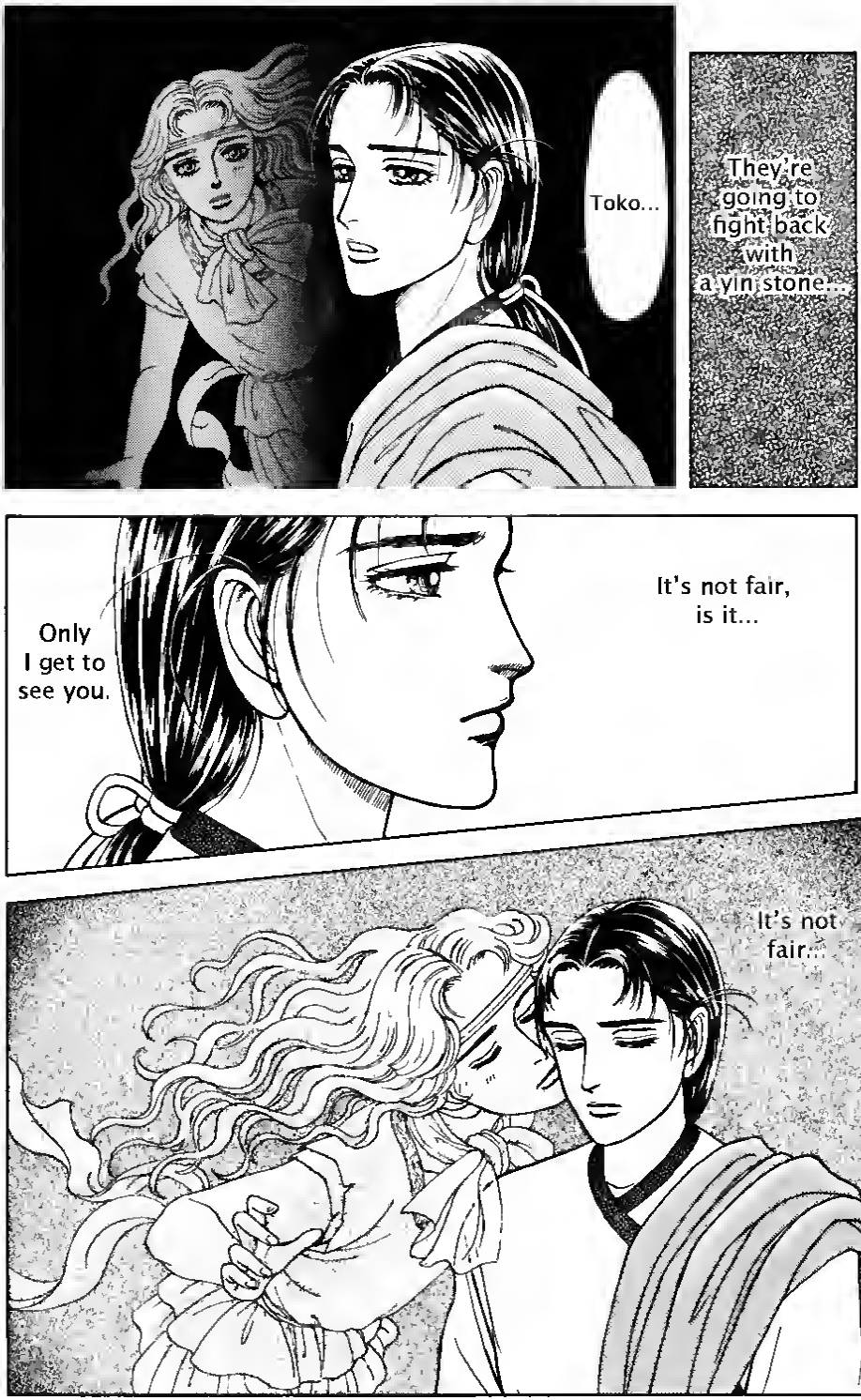
...calling me...!
Takaya is...
He's probably worried about me and can't sleep...

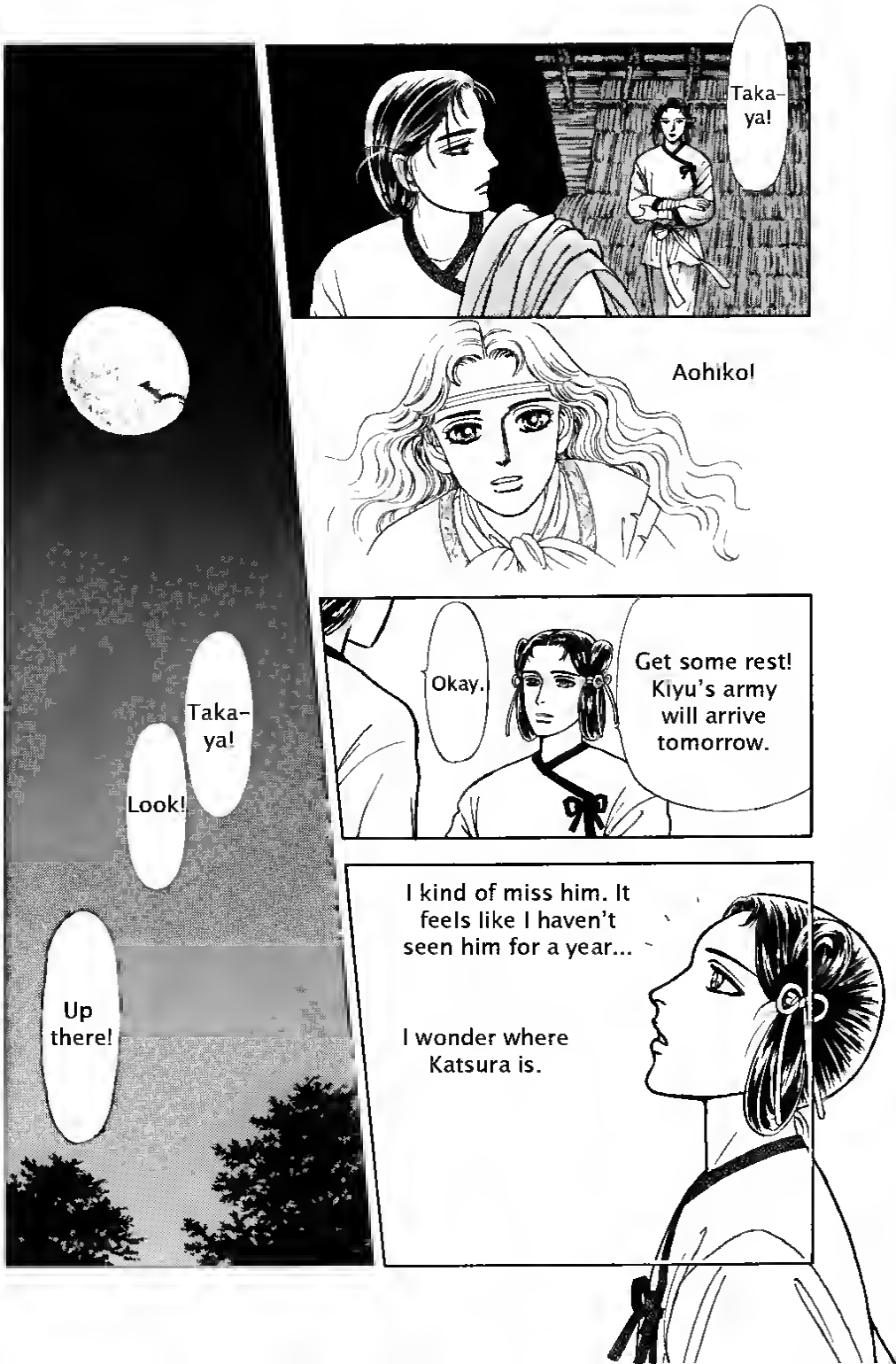
I did it...
Yoko was raised to become an oracle until she was kidnapped at age seven...
Though undeveloped, her special oracular gifts have already been unlocked...

That one time ...
...she left her body like this and saved me...
Takaya!
Call me again!

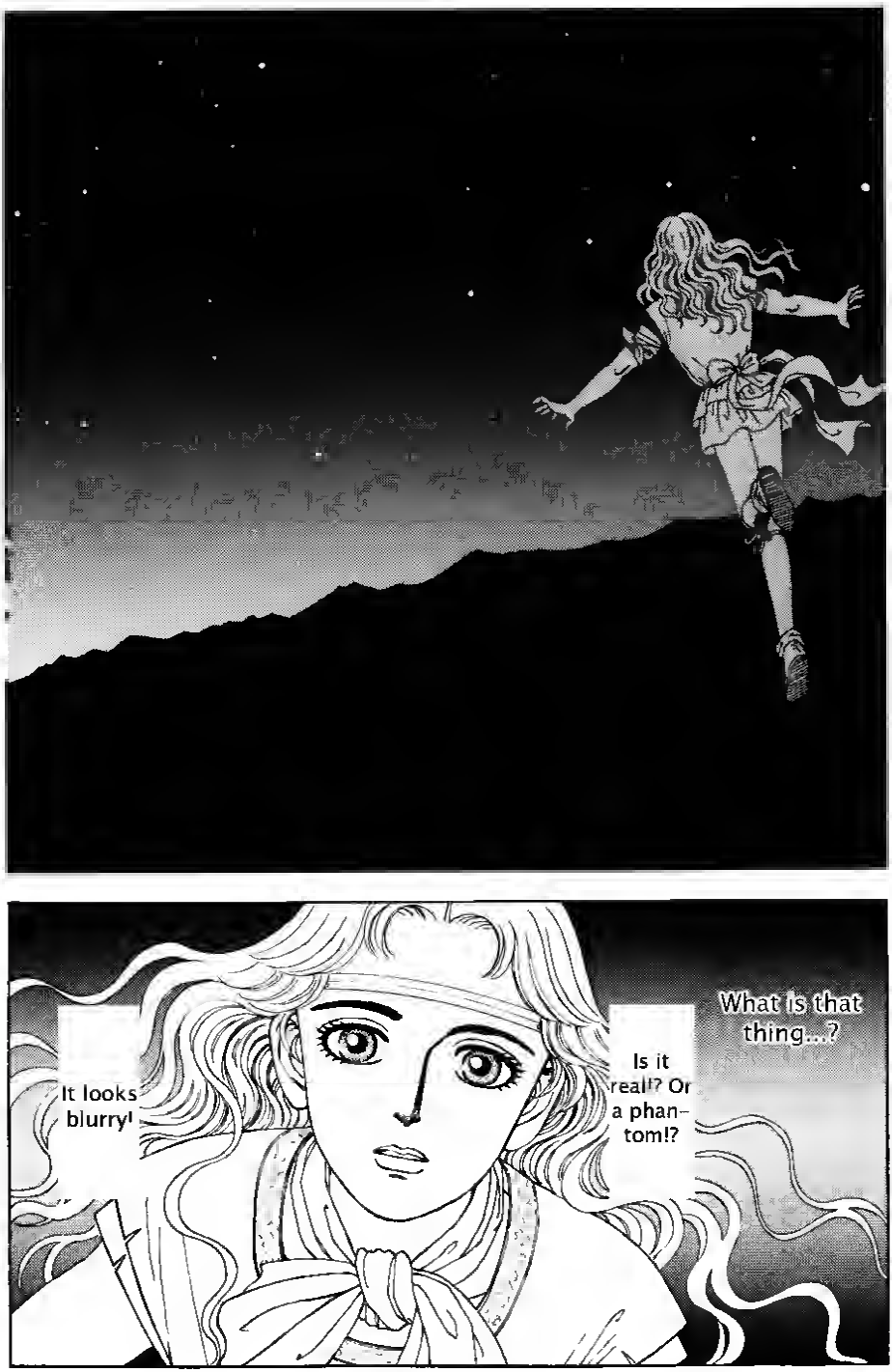

If you call me, I can get there in a second!
Toko!
Come quickly!

It's deserted...
Yin stone!?
Good... Everyone has left...
Argh!
Why didn't Aohiko teach me the yin stone mantra!?


Toko...
They're going to fight back with a yin stone...
Only I get to see you.
It's not fair, is it...
It's not fair...

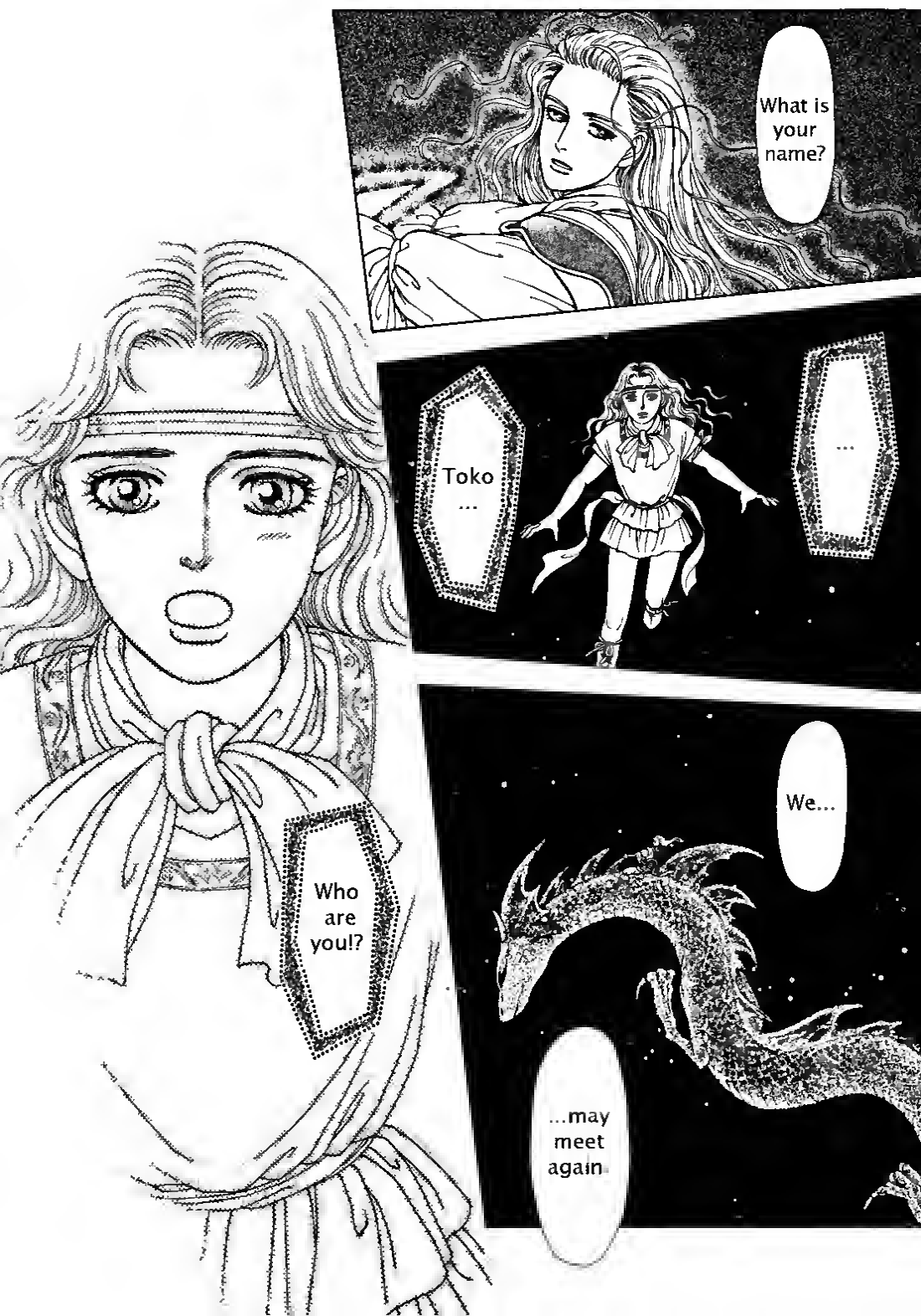

Taka-ya!
Aohiko!
Okay.
Get some rest! Kiyu's army will arrive tomorrow.
I kind of miss him. It feels like I haven't seen him for a year...
I wonder where Katsura is.
Taka-ya!
Look!
Up there!

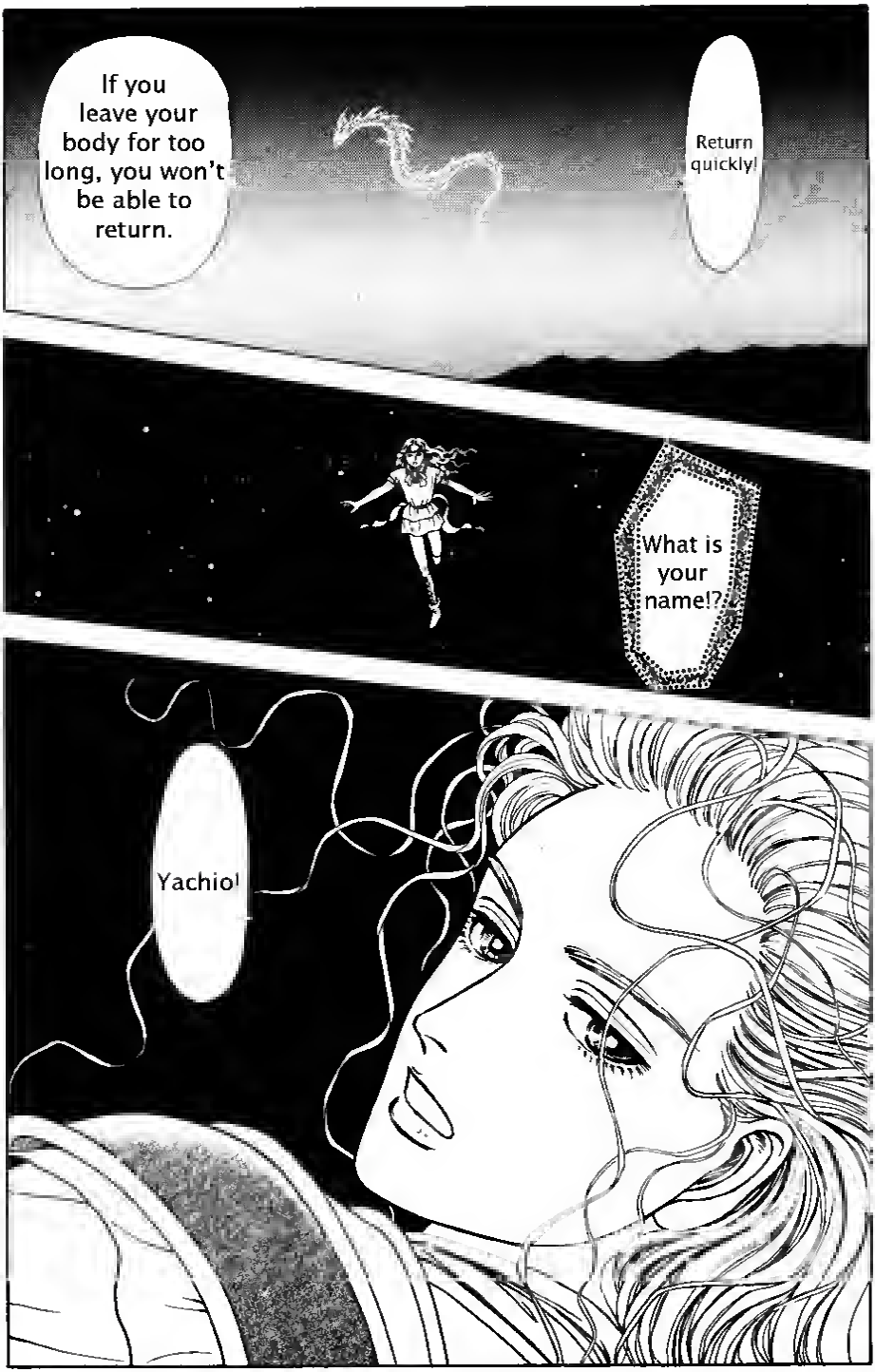
Looks like a large snake...
It's huge...
What is it?
Oh, yeah!
There's something... floating across the moon.
What?


What is that thing...?
Is it real!? Or a phantom!?
It looks blurry!

A human!?

She can see me!?
Is she looking at me!?


What is your name?
Toko ...
...
We...
...may meet again
Who are you!?


If you leave your body for too long, you won't be able to return.
Return quickly!
What is your name!?
Yachio!

Yachio...

Yachio...

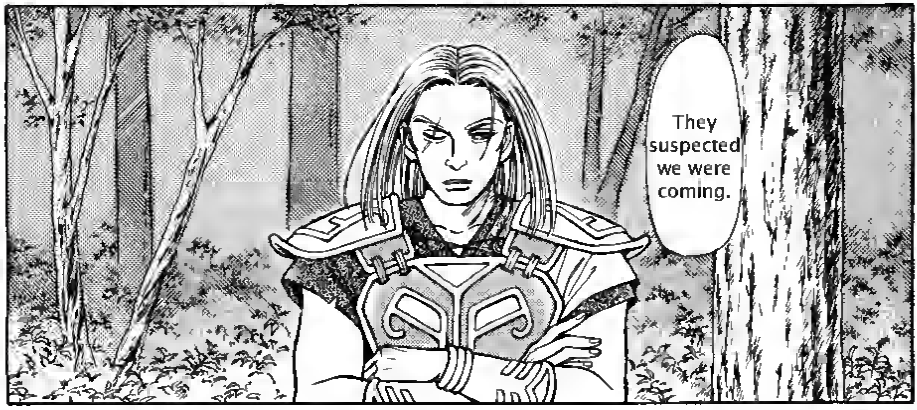
...I thought he might be one...
He didn't look like a woman, but...

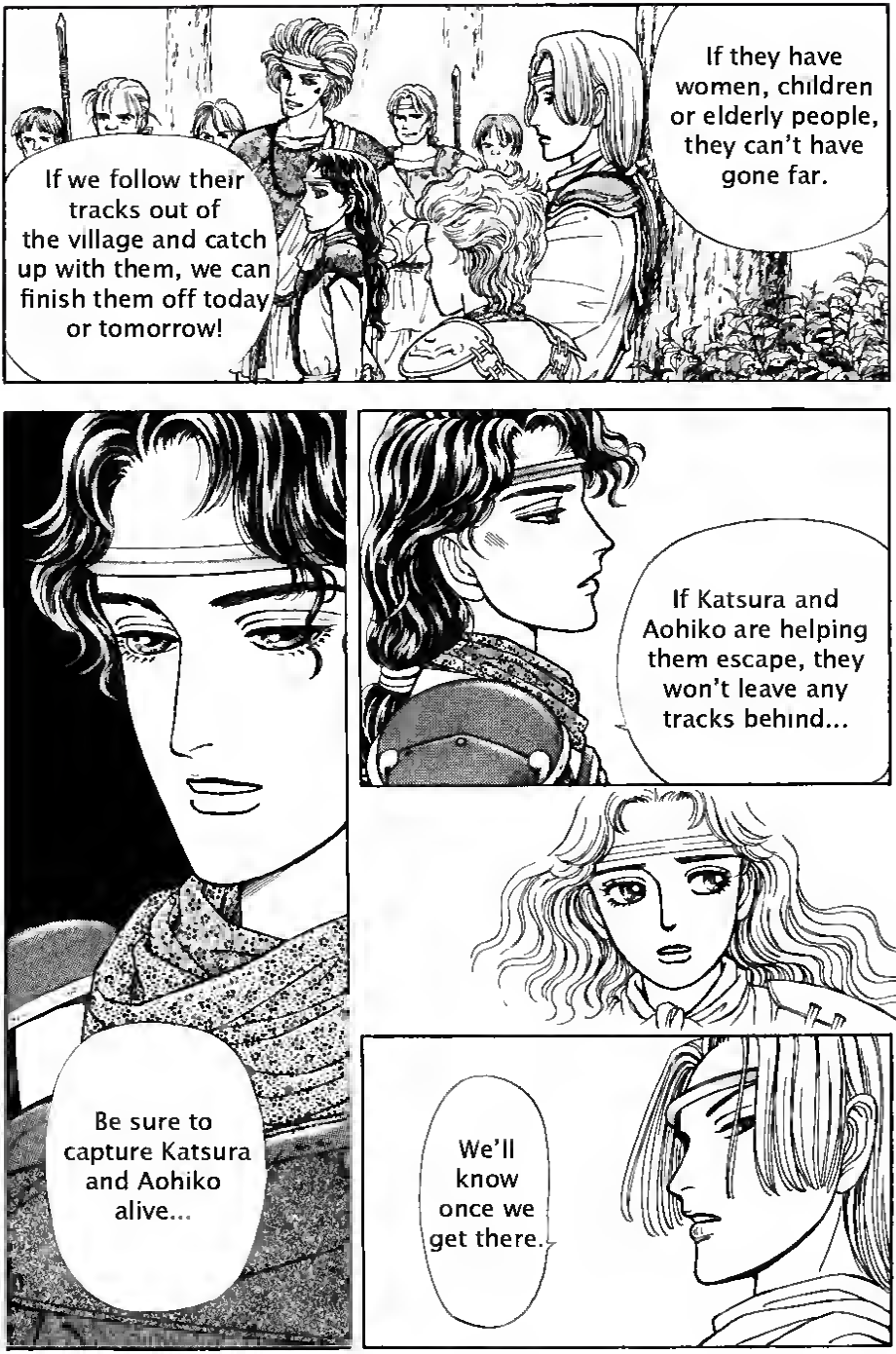
Because...

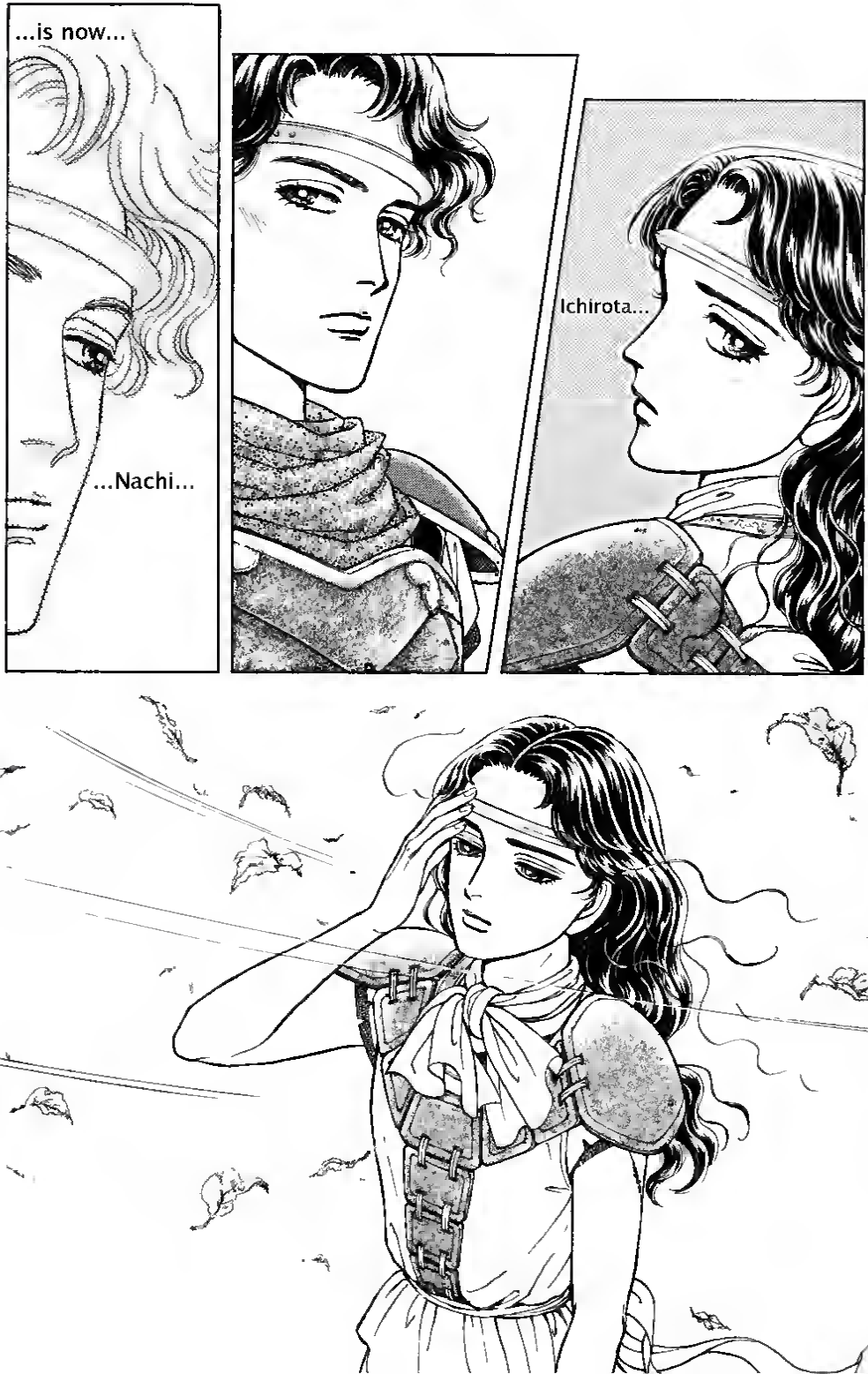
...he looked like...
Katsura....!?

The scout's returned!

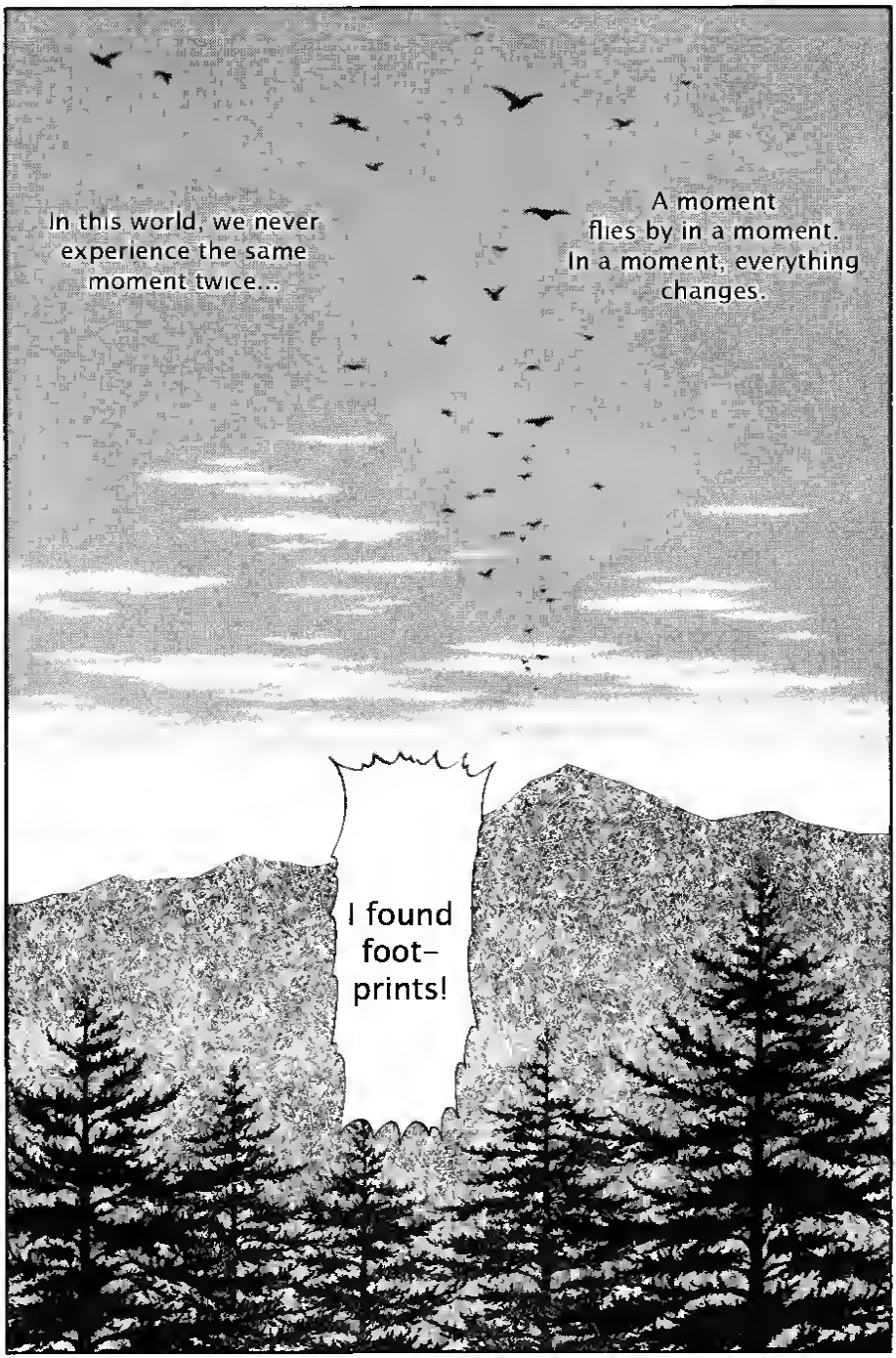
...but it doesn't have any signs of life.
There's a village a short run from here...

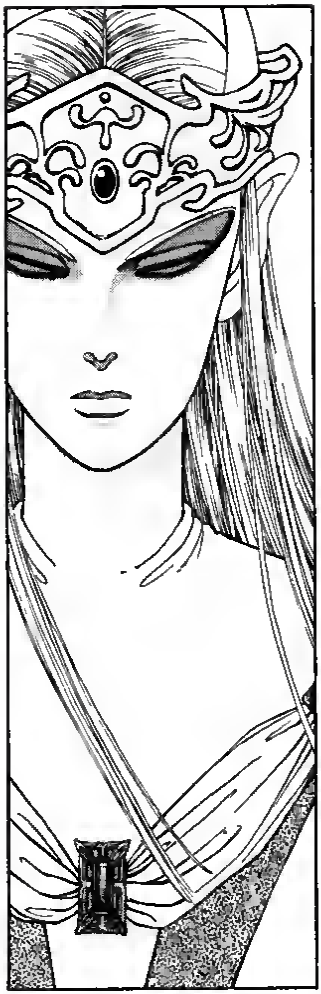

They suspected we were coming.

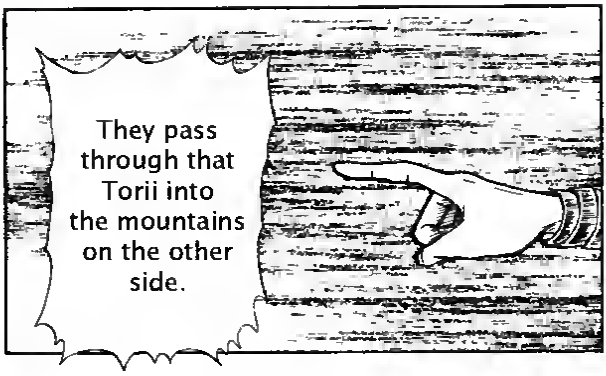

If they have women, children or elderly people, they can't have gone far.
If we follow their tracks out of the village and catch up with them, we can finish them off today or tomorrow!
If Katsura and Aohiko are helping them escape, they won't leave any tracks behind...
Be sure to capture Katsura and Aohiko alive...
We'll know once we get there.


...is now...
...Nachi...
Ichirota...

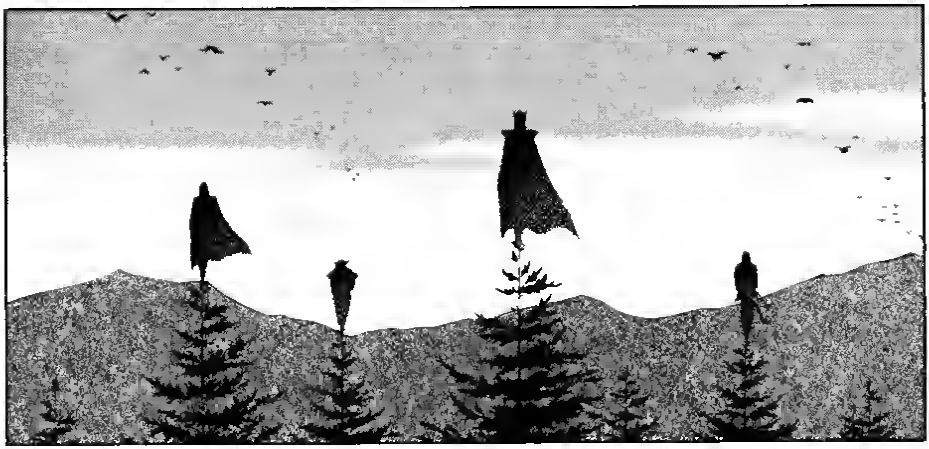
So many things...
...change, little by little...

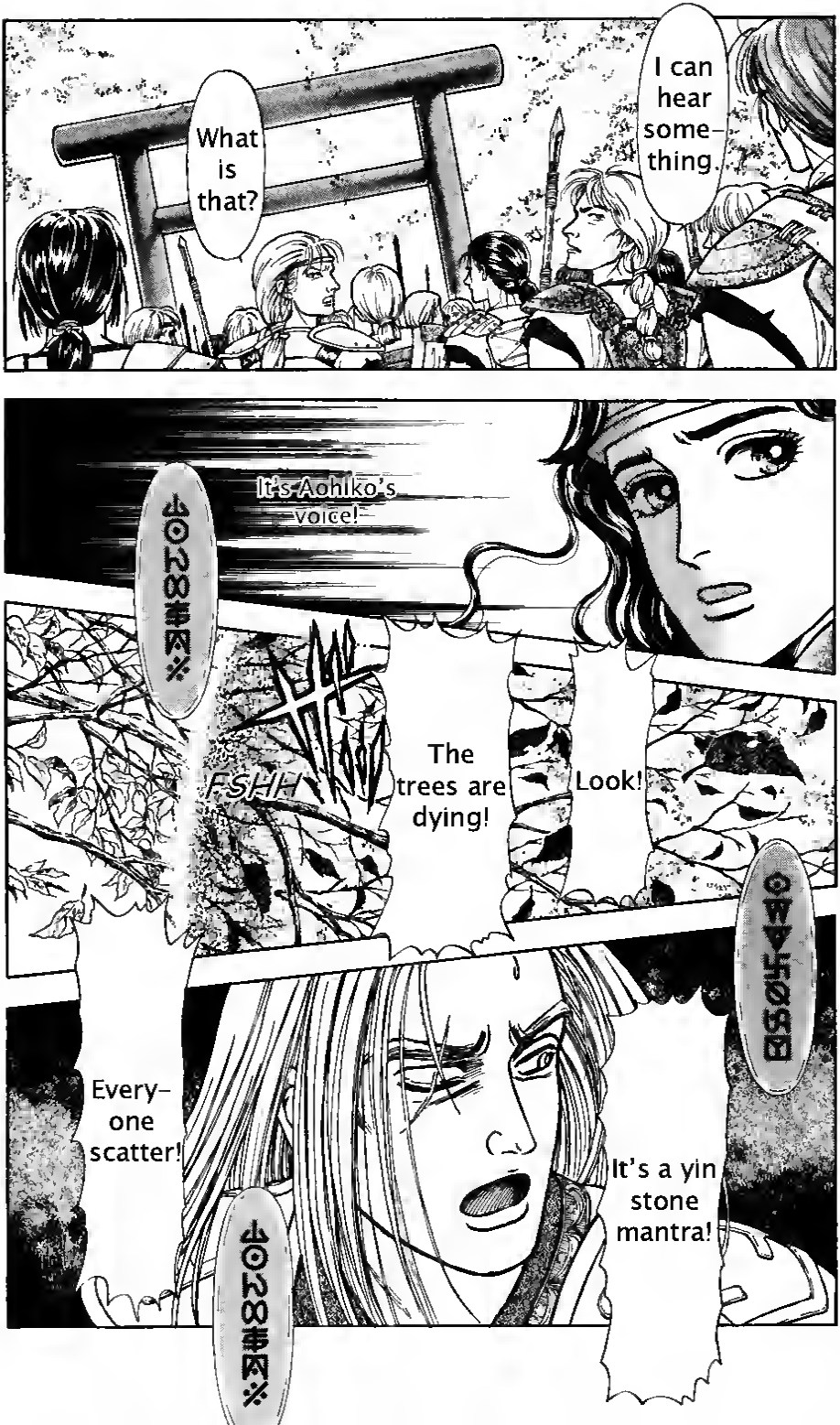

In this world, we never experience the same moment twice...
A moment flies by in a moment. In a moment, everything changes.
I found foot-prints!

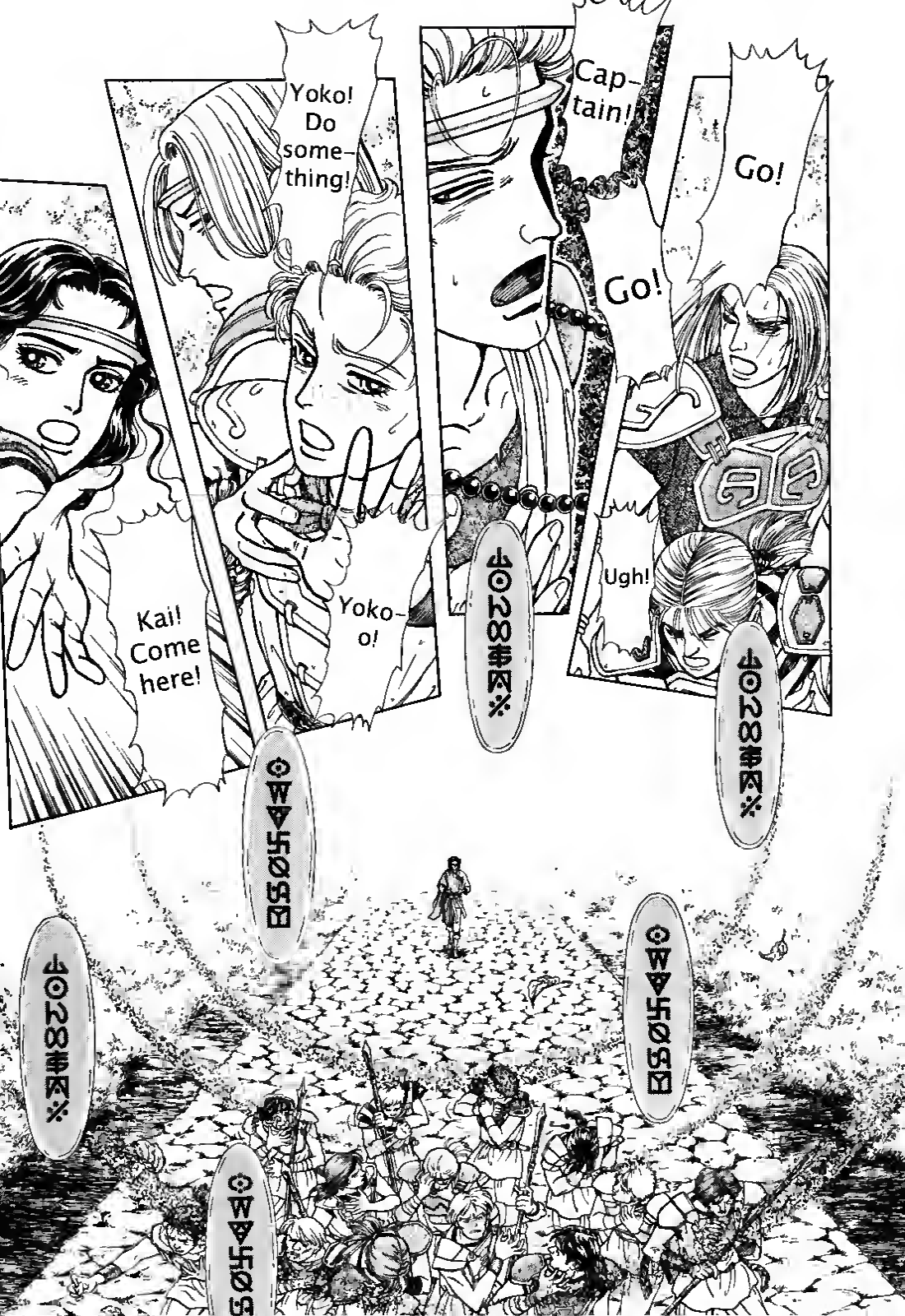



They pass through that Torii into the mountains on the other side.

CRACK
CRACK
Impu-dent bas-tards!
What kind of trap can unarmed peasants lay!? We'll drive them like sheep!
It's a trap ...




I can hear some-thing.
What is that?
It's Aohiko's voice!
FSHH
The trees are dying!
Look!
Every-one scatter!
It's a yin stone mantra!


Yoko! Do some-thing!
Kai! Come here!
Yoko-o!
Cap-tain!
Go!
Go!
Ugh!
ドスドス
ドスドス
ドスドス
ドスドス
ドスドス
ドスドス

ΣΩΦΙΑ
※四季の国
※四季の国
※四季の国
※四季の国

To be continued...

Itihasa 5

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